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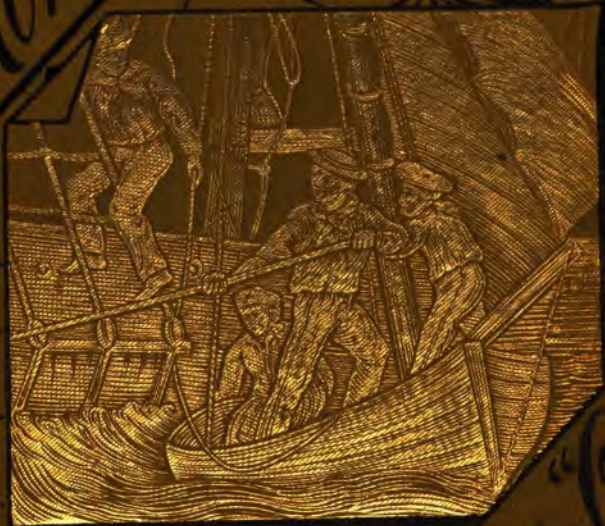
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The Moral Pirates.



& the Cruise of the "Ghost"



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THE MORAL PIRATES
AND
THE CRUISE OF THE "GHOST."



THE TIDE AGAINST THEM.

THE MORAL PIRATES

AND

THE CRUISE OF THE "GHOST."

BY

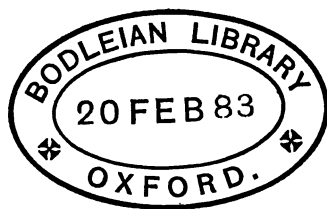
W. L. ALDEN.

London :

JAMES CLARKE & CO., 13 & 14, FLEET STREET.

1881.

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THE MORAL PIRATES.



THE MORAL PIRATES.



CHAPTER I.

THE truth is, John," said Mr. Wilson to his brother, "I am troubled about my boy. Here it is the first of July, and he can't go back to school until the middle of September. He will be idle all that time, and I'm afraid he'll get into mischief. Now, the other day I found him reading a wretched story about pirates. Why should a son of mine care to read about pirates?"

"Because he's a boy. All boys like piratical stories. I know, when I was a boy, I thought that if I could be either a pirate or a stage-driver I should be perfectly happy. Of course you don't want Harry to read rubbish; but it doesn't follow because a boy reads stories about piracy, that he wants to commit murder and robbery. I didn't want to kill anybody: I wanted to be a moral and benevolent pirate. But here comes Harry across the lawn. What will you give me if I will find something for him to do this summer that will make him forget all about piracy?"

"I only wish you would. Tell me what your plan is?"

"Come here a minute, Harry," said Uncle John. "Now own up; do you like books about pirates?"

"Well, yes, uncle, I do."

"So did I when I was your age. I thought it would be the best fun in the world to be a Red Revenger of the Seas."

"Wouldn't it, though!" exclaimed Harry. "I don't mean it would be fun to kill people, and to steal watches, but to have a schooner of your own, and go cruising everywhere, and have storms and—and—hurricanes, you know."

"Why shouldn't you do it this summer?" asked Uncle John. "If you want to cruise in a craft of your own, you shall do it; that is, if your father doesn't object. A schooner would be a little too big for a boy of thirteen; but you and two or three other fellows might make a splendid cruise in a row-boat. You could have a mast and sail, and you could take provisions and things, and cruise from Harlem all the way up into the lakes in the Northern woods. It would be all the same as piracy, except that you would not be committing crimes, and making innocent people wretched."

"Uncle John, it would be just gorgeous! We'd have a gun and a lot of fishing-lines, and we could live on fish and bears. There's bears in the woods, you know."

"You won't find many bears, I'm afraid; but you would have to take a gun, and you might possibly find a wild-cat or two. Who is there that would go with you?"

"Oh, there's Tom Schuyler, and Joe and Jim Sharpe; and there's Sam M'Grath—though he'd be quarrelling all the time. Maybe Charley Smith's father would let him go. He is a first-rate fellow. You'd ought to see him play base-ball once!"

"Three boys besides yourself would be enough. If you have too many, there will be too much risk of quarrelling. There is one thing you must be sure of—no boy must go who can't swim."

"Oh, all the fellows can swim, except Bill Town. He was pretty near drowned last summer. He'd been bragging about what a stunning swimmer he was, and the boys believed him; so one day one of the fellows shoved him off the float, where we go in swimming at our school, and he thought he was dead for sure. The water was only up to his neck, but he couldn't swim a stroke."

"Well, if you can get three good fellows to go with you—boys that you know are not blackguards, but are the kind of boys that your father would be willing to have you associate with—I'll give you a boat and a tent, and you shall have a better cruise than any pirate ever had; for no real pirate ever found any fun in being a thief and a murderer. You go and see Tom and the Sharpe boys, and tell them about it. I'll see about the boat as soon as you have shipped your crew."

"You are quite sure that your plan is a good one?" asked Mr. Wilson, as the boy vanished, with sparkling eyes, to search for his comrades. "Isn't it very risky to let the boys go off by themselves in a boat. Won't they get drowned?"

"There is always more or less danger in boating," replied Uncle John; "but the boys can swim; and they cannot learn prudence and self-reliance without running some risks. Yes, it is a good plan, I am sure. It will give them plenty of exercise in the open air, and will teach them to like manly, honest sports. You see that the reason Harry likes piratical stories is his natural love of adventure. I venture to predict that if their cruise turns out well, those four boys will think stories of pirates are stupid as well as silly."

So the matter was decided. Harry found that Tom Schuyler and the Sharpe boys were delighted with the plan, and Uncle John soon obtained the consent of Mr. Schuyler and Mr. Sharpe. The boys immediately began to make preparations for the cruise; and Uncle John bought a row-boat, and employed a boat-builder to make such alterations as were necessary to fit her for service.

The boat was what is called a Whitehall row-boat. She was seventeen feet long, and rowed very easily, and she carried a small mast with a spritsail. By Uncle John's orders an air-tight box, made of tin, was fitted into each end of the boat, so that, even if she were to be filled with water, the air in the tin boxes would float her. She was painted white outside, with a narrow blue streak, and dark brown inside. Harry named her the *Whitewing*; and his mother made a beautiful silk signal for her, which was to be carried at the sprit when under sail, and on a small staff at the bow of the boat at other times. For oars there were two pairs of light

seven-foot sculls, and a pair of ten-foot oars, each of which was to be pulled by a single boy. The rudder was fitted with a yoke and a pair of lines, and the sail was of new and



THE "WHITEWING" AT HARLEM.

very light canvas. On one side of the boat was a little locker, made to hold a gun ; and on the other side were places for fishing-rods and fishing-tackle. When she was brought

round to Harlem, and Harry saw her for the first time, he was so overjoyed that he turned two or three hand-springs, bringing up during the last one against a post—an exploit which nearly broke his shin, and induced his uncle to remark that he would never rise to distinction as a Moral Pirate unless he could give up turning hand-springs while on duty.

Harry could row very fairly, for he belonged to a boat-club at school. It was not very much of a club ; but then, the club-boat was not very much of a boat, being a small, flat-bottomed skiff, which leaked so badly that she could not be kept afloat unless one boy kept constantly at work baling. However, Harry learned to row in her, and he now found this knowledge very useful. He was anxious to start on the cruise immediately, but his uncle insisted that the crew must first be trained. "I must teach you to sail, and you must teach your crew to row," said Uncle John. "The Department will never consent to let a boat go on a cruise unless her commander and her crew know their duty."

"What's the Department?" asked Harry.

"The Navy Department has the whole charge of the Navy, and sends vessels where it pleases. Now, I consider that I represent a Department of Moral Piracy, and I therefore superintend the fitting out of the *Whitewing*. You can't expect moral piracy to flourish unless you respect the Department, and obey its orders."

"All right, uncle," replied Harry. "Of course the Department furnishes stores and everything else for a cruise, doesn't it?"

"I suppose it must," said his uncle, laughing. "I didn't think of that when I proposed to become a Department."

The boys met every day at Harlem and practised rowing. Uncle John taught them how to sail the boat, by letting them take her out under sail when there was very little breeze, while he kept close along-side in another boat very much like the *Whitewing*. Harry sat in the stern-sheets, holding the yoke-lines. Tom Schuyler, who was fourteen years old, and a boy of more than usual prudence, sat on the nearest thwart and held the sheet, which passed under a cleat without being made fast to it, in his hand. Next came Jim Sharpe, whose business it was to unship the mast when

the captain should order sail to be taken in ; and on the forward thwart sat Joe Sharpe, who was not quite twelve, and who kept the boat-hook within reach, so as to use it on coming to shore. The boys kept the same positions when rowing, Tom Schuyler being the stroke. Uncle John told them that if every one always had the same seat, and had a particular duty assigned to him, it would prevent confusion and dispute, and greatly increase the safety of the vessel and crew.

It was not long before Harry could sail the boat nicely, and the others, by attending closely to Uncle John's lessons, learned almost as much as their young captain. So far as boat-sailing can be taught in fair weather, Harry was carefully and thoroughly taught in six or seven lessons, and could handle the *Whitewing* beautifully ; but the ability to judge of the weather, to tell when it is going to blow, and how the wind will probably shift, can of course be learned only by actual experience.





CHAPTER II.

WHEN Uncle John announced that the Department was satisfied with the ability of the captain and crew to manage the *Whitewing*, the day for sailing was fixed, and the boys laid in their stores. Each one had a fishing-line and hooks, and Harry and Tom each took a fishing-pole—two poles being as many as were needed, since most of the fishing would probably be done with drop-lines. Uncle John lent Harry his double-barrelled gun, and a supply of ammunition. Each boy took a tin plate, a tin cup, knife, fork, and spoon. For cooking purposes, the boat carried a coffee-pot, two tin cake-pans, which could be used as frying-pans as well as for other purposes, and two small tin pails. Harry's mother lent him several large round tin boxes, in which were stored four pounds of coffee, two pounds of sugar, a pound of Indian meal, a large quantity of crackers, some salt, and a little pepper. The rest of the provisions consisted of two cans of soup, two cans of corned-beef, a can of roast-beef, two small cans of devilled chicken, four cans of fresh peaches, a little package of condensed beef for making beef-tea, and a cold-boiled ham. The boat was furnished with an A tent, four rubber blankets and four woollen blankets, a hatchet, a quantity of spare cordage, a little bull's-eye lantern, which burnt olive-oil, a few copper nails, a pair of pliers, and a small piece of zinc and a little white lead for mending a leak. Of course there was a bottle of oil for the lantern ; and Mrs. Schuyler added a little box of pills and a bottle of

"Hamlin's Mixture" as medical stores. The boys wore blue flannel trousers and shirts, and each one carried an extra pair of trousers, and an extra shirt instead of a coat. These, with a few pairs of stockings and two or three handkerchiefs, were all the clothing that they needed, so Uncle John said; though the boys had imagined that they must make at least two complete suits. He showed them that two flannel shirts worn at the same time, one over the other, would be as warm as one shirt and a coat, and that if their clothing became wet, it could be easily dried. "Flannel and the compass are the two things that are indispensable to navigation," said Uncle John; "if flannel shirts had not been invented, Columbus would never have crossed the Atlantic." Perhaps there was a little exaggeration in this; but when we remember that flannel is the only material that is warm in cold weather, and cool in hot weather, and that dries almost as soon as it is wrung out and hung in the wind, it is difficult to see how sailors could do without it.

The boys agreed very readily to take with them only what Uncle John advised. Tom Schuyler, however, was very anxious to take a heavy iron vice, which he said could be screwed on the gunwale of the boat, and might prove to be very useful, although he could not say precisely what he expected to use it for. Joe Sharpe also wanted to take a baseball and bat, but neither the vice nor the ball and bat were taken.

The *Whitewing* started from the foot of East Street, on a Monday morning in the middle of July, at about nine o'clock. Quite a small crowd of friends were present to see the boys off, and the neat appearance of the boat and her crew attracted the attention of all the idlers along the shore. When all the cargo was stowed, and everything was ready, Uncle John called the boys aside, and said, "Now, boys, you must sign the articles."

"What are articles?" asked all the boys at once.

"They are certain regulations, which every respectable pirate, or any other sailor for that matter, must agree to keep when he joins a ship. I'll read the articles, and if any of you don't like any one of them say so frankly, for you must

not begin a cruise in a dissatisfied state of mind. Here are the articles :—

“ I. *We, the captain and crew of the Whitewing promise to decide all disputed questions by the vote of the majority, except questions concerning the management of the boat. The orders of the captain, in all matters connected with the management of the boat, shall be promptly obeyed by the crew.*”

“ Now, if anybody thinks that the captain should not have the full control of the boat, let him say so at once. Very likely the captain will make mistakes ; but the boat will be safer, even if the crew obeys a wrong order, than it would be if every order should be debated by the crew. You can't hold town-meetings when you are afloat. Harry, I think, understands pretty well how to sail the boat. Will you agree to obey his orders ? ”

All the boys said they would ; and Joe Sharpe added that he thought the captain ought to have the right to put mutineers in irons.

“ That, let us hope, will not be necessary,” said Uncle John. “ Now listen to the second article :

“ II. *We promise not to take corn, apples, or other property without permission of the owner.*”

“ You will very likely camp near some field where corn, or potatoes, or something eatable, is growing. Many people think there is no harm in taking a few ears of corn or a half-dozen apples. I want you to remember that to take anything that is not your own, unless you have permission to do so, is stealing. It's an ugly word, but it can't be smoothed over in any way. Do you object to this article ? ”

Nobody objected to it. “ We're moral pirates, Uncle John,” said Tom Schuyler, “ and we won't disgrace the Department by stealing.”

“ I know you would not, except through thoughtlessness. Now, these are all the articles. I did think of asking you not to quarrel or to use bad language, but I don't believe it is necessary to ask you to make such a promise, and if it were, you probably would not keep it. So, sign the articles, give them to the captain, and take your stations.”

The articles were signed. The captain seated himself in the stern-sheets, and took the yoke-lines. The rest took

their proper places, and Joe Sharpe held the boat to the dock by the boat-hook. "Are you all ready?" cried Uncle John. "All ready, sir!" answered Harry. "Then give way with your oars! Good-bye, boys, and don't forget to send reports to the Department."

The boat glided away from the shore with Tom and Jim each pulling a pair of sculls. The group on the dock gave the boys a farewell cheer, and in a few moments they were hid from sight by the Third Avenue bridge. The tide was against them, but the day was a cool one for the season, and the boys rowed steadily on in the very best of spirits. There was a slight south wind; but as there were several bridges to pass, Harry thought it best not to set the sail before reaching the Hudson River. It required careful steering to avoid the steamboats, bridge-piles, and small boats; but the *Whitewing* was guided safely, and her signal—a red flag with a white cross—floated gaily at the bow.

Uncle John had made one serious mistake: he had forgotten all about the tide, and never thought of the difficulty the boys would find in passing Farmers-bridge with the tide against them. They had passed High Bridge, and had entered a part of the river with which the boys were not familiar, when Joe Sharpe suddenly called out, "There's a low bridge right ahead that we can't pass." A few more strokes of the oars enabled Harry to see a long low bridge, which completely blocked up the river except at one place, that seemed not much wider than the boat. Through this narrow channel the tide was rushing fiercely, the water heaping itself up in waves that looked unpleasantly high and rough. The boat was rowed as close as possible to the opening under the bridge; but the current was so strong that the boys could not row against it, and even if they had been able to stem it, the channel was too narrow to permit them to use the oars.

Harry ordered the boat to be rowed up to the bridge at a place where was a quiet eddy, and all the crew went ashore to contrive some way of overcoming the difficulty. Presently Harry thought of a plan. "If we could get the painter under the bridge, we could pull the boat through easy enough if there was nobody in her."

"That's all very well," said Joe, "but how are you going to get the painter through?"

"I know," cried Jim. "Let's take a long piece of rope and drop it in the water the other side of the bridge. The current will float it through, and we can catch it and tie it to the painter."

The plan seemed a good one; and so the boys took a piece of spare rope from the boat, tied a bit of board to one end of it for a float, dropped the float into the water, and held on to the other end of the rope. When the float came in sight below the bridge they caught it with the boat-hook, and, throwing away the piece of board, tied the rope to the painter. "Now let Joe Sharpe get in the bow of the boat, to keep her from running against anything, and we'll haul her right through," exclaimed Harry.

Joe took his place in the bow, and, pushing the boat off, let her float into the current. Then the three other boys pulled on the rope, and were delighted to see the boat glide under the bridge. Suddenly Joe gave a wild yell. "She's sinking, boys!" he cried: "let go the rope, or I'll be drowned!" The boys, terribly frightened, dropped the rope, and in another minute the boat floated back on the current, half full of water, and without Joe. Almost as soon as it came in sight, Harry had thrown off his shoes and jumped into the river.



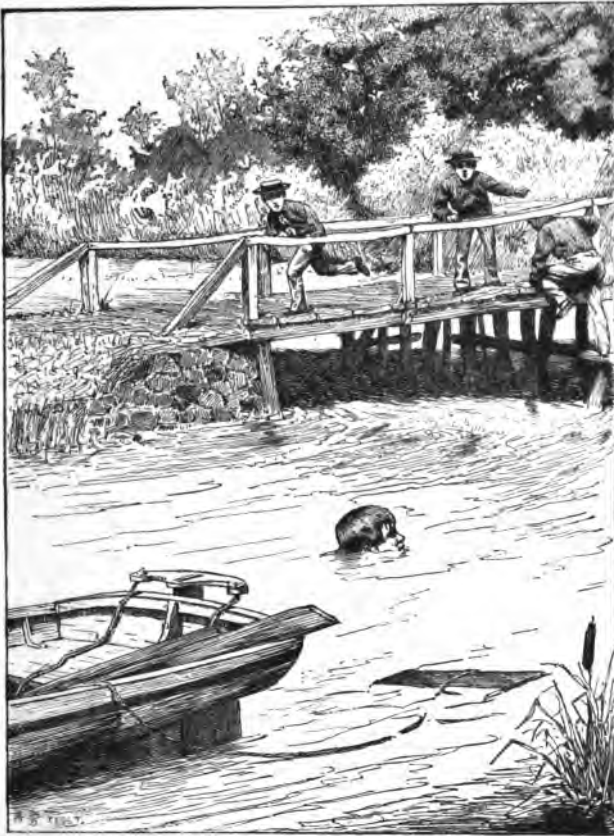


CHAPTER III.

AS Harry vanished, Joe's head appeared, as he climbed up the side of the bridge and joined his brother and Tom. Their anxiety was now for Harry, who had been swept through the channel under the bridge, and was manfully swimming toward the eddy where the boys had landed. He came ashore none the worse for his bath, and was delighted to find that Joe was not only safe but dry. Joe explained that the boat had drifted against one of the piles of the bridge, and the current and the tow-rope together had forced one of her sides so low down that the water began to pour in. Joe thought that if the river intended to get into the boat, he had better get out; so he sprang up and caught one of the timbers of the bridge, and so climbed safely up to the roadway. The boat, relieved of his weight and freed from the tow-line, drifted quietly away, and was now floating peacefully on the river about twenty rods from the shore.

Luckily an old man in a row-boat saw the runaway *Whitewing*, and kindly caught her and brought her up to the bridge. As the boys baled her out, they told him how the accident happened, and the gruff old man said it "sarved 'em right." "When you tow a boat next time," he continued, "you'll know enough to put all your weight in the stern. Did you ever see a steamboat towing a row-boat with a man in the bow? If ever you do, you'll see him going overboard mighty quick. A boat'll sheer all over creation if you tow her with a fellow in the bow. You just

put the biggest of you fellows in the stern of that there boat, and she'll go through under the bridge just as steady as a church."



HARRY SWIMS FOR THE EDDY.

The boys gladly took the old man's advice. When the boat was baled out, they floated the rope down again, and

when it was made fast, Tom Schuyler, who was the heaviest of the boys, offered to sit in the stern. His weight brought the bow of the boat out of the water, and she was towed quickly and safely through. The boys resumed their places as soon as Harry had put on dry clothes, and after a short and easy row glided under the Spuyten Duyvel railway bridge, and found themselves on the broad and placid Hudson. They rowed on for nearly a mile, and then, having found a little sandy cove, ran the boat aground, and went ashore to rest. After a good swim, which all greatly enjoyed, including Harry, who said that his recent bath at Farmersbridge ought not to be counted, since it was more of a duty than a pleasure, they sat down to eat a nice cold lunch of ham sandwiches that Mrs. Wilson had kindly prepared; and when they were no longer hungry, they stretched themselves lazily in the shade.

"Well, boys," said Harry, "we made a big mistake at the bridge; but we learned something, and we won't get the boat swamped that way again."

"I'm awfully obliged to Harry for jumping in after me," said Joe; "but it's the first time I ever heard of a captain jumping over after a sailor. When a sailor falls overboard, the captain just stands on the deck and looks around, kind of careless like, while the second mate and four sailors jump into a boat and pick the man up. That's the way it's done; for I know a fellow that saw a man fall overboard on a steamship, and he said that was how the captain did."

"All right," said Harry; "I won't jump in for you again, Joe. The fact is, boys, I oughtn't to have done it without waiting to find out whether there was really anything the matter with Joe. I'll tell you what we'll do. Joe is a first-rate swimmer, and we'll make a rule that whenever anybody is to jump into the river for anything, Joe shall do it. What do you say?"

"Oh, I'm willing enough," said Joe. "I don't care who jumps as long as the captain don't. It won't look well for the captain to be all the time jumping overboard to pick somebody up."

"A better rule," remarked Tom, "would be that no fellow should fall overboard."

"I move to amend that," cried Jim, "by forbidding any accidents to happen to any of us."

"But you can't do that," said Tom, who never understood a joke. "Accidents never would happen if people could help themselves."

"Well," said Harry, "if the rest of you will agree not to fall overboard, I'll promise that the captain shan't spend all his time in jumping after you. But if you are all ready, we'd better start on. There's a nice little breeze, and we can rest in the boat."

By this time Harry's shirt and trousers, which had been wrung out and hung up on a bush, were perfectly dry. He packed them away with his rubber blanket rolled tightly around them, and Jim attended to the duty of stepping the mast. Then the boys took their places, and Joe pushed the boat off with the boat-hook. The gentle breeze filled the sail, and the *Whitewing* went peacefully on her way up the river.

"Boys," said Harry, presently, "it's getting awfully hot."

"That's because we're sailing right before the wind," said Tom. "We are going just about as fast as the wind goes, and that's the reason why we don't feel it."

"Is this a lecture on wind, by Professor Thomas Schuyler?" asked Joe. "Because if it is, I'd rather hear it when it's cooler. Let's go over to the other side of the river, where we can get in the shade of the Palisades."

It was now about three o'clock, and the sun was very hot. The boat seemed to the boys to creep across the river, and the Palisades seemed to move away just as fast as they approached them. When they finally did come into the shadow of those huge rocks they thought they had never known anything so delightful as the change from the scorching sunshine to the cool shade. Joe and his brother stretched themselves out, and put their blankets under their heads. Presently they grew tired of talking, and in a little while they were fast asleep. Tom was not sleepy; but he was so delighted with the beauty of the shore, as seen from the boat, that he did not care to talk.

For a long time the boat glided stealthily along. The Palisades were passed, and a long pier projecting into the



SAILING BY THE PALISADES.

river from the west shore gradually came in sight. When the boat came up with the pier, half-a-dozen barges lay alongside of it, into which men were sliding enormous cakes of ice. The Sharpe boys woke up, and proposed to stop and get a little ice. The men let them pick up as many small pieces of ice as they could carry, and they went on their way so much refreshed that they chattered away as gaily as possible.

Uncle John had warned them to select a camping-ground long before dark. They remembered this advice, and at about five o'clock they landed on a little low point of land a few miles below the entrance to the Highlands. They first hauled the boat a little way up the beach, so that it would be sure not to float off, and then began to take the tent, the cooking things, and the provisions for supper out of her.

"We want to pitch the tent and make a fire," said Harry, "and somebody ought to get some milk. Let's pitch the tent first."

"I'll do that," said Tom, "while you fellows get the supper."

"It takes two or three fellows to pitch the tent," said Harry; "you can't do it alone."

"I'll undertake to pitch it alone," replied Tom. "One of you can get firewood, one can go for milk, and the other can get out the things for supper. Here goes for the tent."

The tent was furnished with two upright poles and a ridge pole, each one of which was made in two pieces and joined together with ferrules, like a fishing-rod. Tom selected a soft, sandy spot close by the water's edge, where he spread out the tent, and pinned down each of the four corners with rough wooden pins, which he cut with the hatchet from a piece of drift-wood. Then he crept under the canvas with the poles. He put one of the upright poles in its place with the end of the ridge-pole over it, and then, holding the other end of the ridge-pole in one hand, he put the second pole in position with his other hand, and pushed the end of the ridge-pole into its proper place. The tent was now pitched, and all that remained to be done was to tighten the four corner pegs and to drive in the other ones.

Meanwhile Jim had taken one of the pails and gone toward a distant farmhouse for milk. Joe had collected a pile of firewood, and Harry had lighted the fire and put the other tin pail, half full of water, to boil over it. By the time the water had boiled Jim had returned, bringing the milk with him. It did not take long to make coffee; and then the boys sat down on the sand, each with a tin cup of hot coffee at his side, and proceeded to eat a supper of ham sandwiches and cake. It was not the kind of supper that they expected to have on subsequent nights; but Mrs. Wilson's sandwiches and cake had to be eaten in order to keep them from spoiling. After the coffee was gone they each had a cup of cold milk, and then put the rest of it in a shady place to be used for breakfast. The provisions were carefully covered up, so as to protect them in case of rain, and then the beds were made. This last operation was a very easy one, since the sand was soft enough for a mattress, and all that needed to be done was to spread the rubber blankets on the ground as a protection from the damp. Then the boys rolled up their spare clothing for pillows, and, wrapping themselves in their blankets, were soon sound asleep.





CHAPTER IV.

SOME time in the middle of the night Joe Sharpe woke up from a dream that he had fallen into the river, and could not get out. He thought that he had caught hold of the supports of a bridge, and had drawn himself partly out of the water, but that he had not strength enough to drag his legs out, and that, on the contrary, he was slowly sinking back. When he awoke he found that he was very cold, and that his blanket felt particularly heavy. He put his hand down to move the blanket, when, to his great surprise, he found that he was lying with his legs in a pool of water.

Joe instantly shouted to the other boys, and told them to wake up, for it was raining, and the tent was leaking. As each boy woke up he found himself as wet as Joe, and at first all supposed that it was raining heavily. They soon found, however, that no rain-drops were pattering on the outside of the tent, and that the stars were shining through the open flap. "There's water in this tent," said Tom, with the air of having made a grand discovery. "If any of you fellows have been throwing water on me, it was a mean trick," said Jim. All at once an idea struck Harry. "Boys," he exclaimed, "it's the tide! We've got to get out of this place mighty quick, or the tide will wash the tent away."

The boys sprang up, and rushed out of the tent. They had gone to bed at low-tide, and as the tide rose it had gradually invaded the tent. The boat was still safe, but the

water had surrounded it, and in a very short time would be deep enough to float it. The tide was still rising, and it was evident that no time should be lost if the tent was to be saved.

Two of the boys hurriedly seized the blankets and other articles which were in the tent, and carried them on to the higher ground ; while the other two pulled up the pins, and dragged the tent out of reach of the water. Then they pulled the boat further up the beach, and, having thus made everything safe, had leisure to discover that they were miserably cold, and that their clothes, from the waist down, were wet through.

Luckily, their spare clothing, which they had used for pillows, was untouched by the water, so that they were able to put on dry shirts and trousers. Their blankets, however, had been thoroughly soaked, and it was too cold to think of sleeping without them. There was nothing to be done but to build a fire, and sit around it until daylight. It was by no means easy to collect firewood in the dark ; and as soon as a boy succeeded in getting an armful of drift-wood, he usually stumbled and fell down with it. There was not very much fun in this ; but when the fire finally blazed up, and its pleasant warmth conquered the cold night-air, the boys began to regain their spirits.

"I wonder what time it is ?" said one.

Tom had a watch, but he had forgotten to wind it up for two or three nights, and it had stopped at eight o'clock. The boys were quite sure, however, that they could not have been asleep more than half an hour.

"It's about one o'clock," said Harry, presently.

"I don't believe it's more than nine," said Joe.

"We must have gone into the tent about an hour after sunset," continued Harry, "and the sun sets between six and seven. It was low-tide then, and it's pretty near high-tide now ; and since the tide runs up for about six hours, it must be somewhere between twelve and one."

"You're right!" exclaimed Jim. "Look at the stars. That bright star over there in the west was just rising when we went to bed."

"You ought to say 'turned in !'" said Joe. "Sailors never go to bed ; they always 'turn in.'"

"Well, we can't turn in any more to-night," replied Tom. "What do you say, boys? suppose we have breakfast—it'll pass away the time, and we can have another breakfast by-and-by."

Now that the boys thought of it, they began to feel hungry, for they had had a very light supper. Everybody felt that hot coffee would be very nice; so they all went to work—made coffee, fried a piece of ham, and, with a few slices of bread, made a capital breakfast. They wrung out the wet blankets and clothes, and hung them up by the fire to dry. Then they had to collect more firewood; and gradually the faint light of the dawn became visible, before they really had time to find the task of waiting for daylight tiresome.

They decided that it would not do to start with wet blankets, since they could not dry them in the boat. They therefore continued to keep up a brisk fire, and to watch the blankets closely, in order to see that they did not get scorched. After a time the sun came out bright and hot, and took the drying business in charge. The boys went into the river, and had a nice long swim, and then spent some time in carefully packing everything into the boat. By the time the blankets were dry, and they were ready to start, the tide had fallen so low that the boat was high and dry; and in spite of all their efforts they could not launch her while she was loaded.

"We'll have to take all the things out of her," said Harry.

"It reminds me," remarked Joe, "of Robinson Crusoe that time he built his big canoe, and then couldn't launch it."

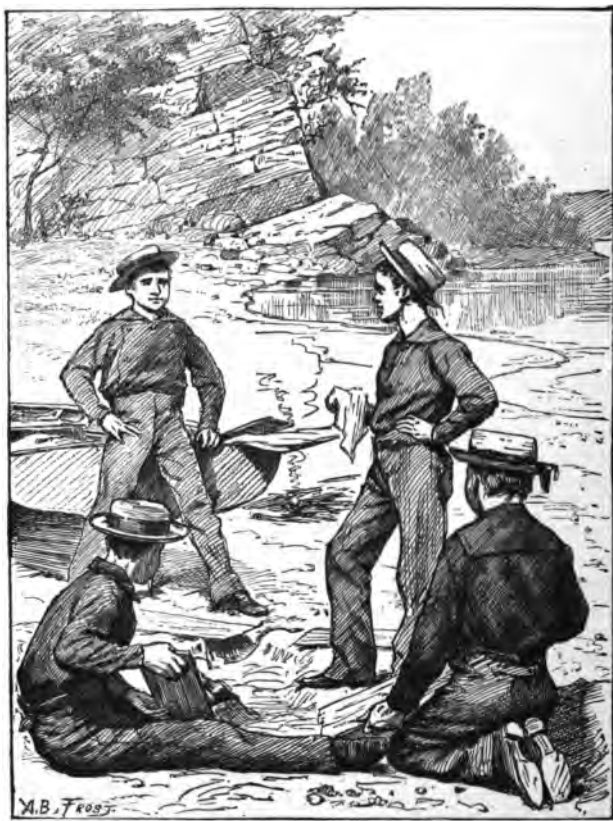
"Robinson wasn't very sharp," said Jim. "Why didn't he make a set of rollers, and put them on the boat?"

"Much good rollers would have been," replied Joe. "Wasn't there a hill between the boat and the water? He couldn't roll a heavy boat uphill, could he?"

"He could have made a couple of pulleys, and rigged a rope through them, and then made a windlass, and put the rope round it," argued Jim.

"Yes; and he could have built a steam-engine and a

railroad, and dragged the boat down to the shore that way, just about as easy."



"IF YOU WANT TO DIG, DIG. I DON'T INTEND TO DO ANY MORE DIGGING."

"He couldn't dig a canal, for he thought about that, and found it would take too much work," said Jim.

"But we can," cried Harry. "If we just scoop out a little sand, we can launch the boat with everything in her!"

The boys liked the idea of a canal; and they each found a large shingle on the beach, and began to dig. They dug for nearly an hour, but the boat was no nearer being launched than when they began. Tom stopped digging, and made a calculation. "It will take about two days of hard work to dig a canal deep enough to float that boat. If you want to dig, dig; I don't intend to do any more digging."

When the other boys considered the matter, they saw that Tom was right, and they gave up the idea of making a canal. It was now about ten o'clock, and they were rather tired and very hungry. A second breakfast was agreed to be necessary, and once more the fire was built up and a meal prepared. Then the boat was unloaded and launched, and the boys, taking off their shoes and rolling up their trousers, waded in the water and reloaded her. It was noon by the sun before they finally had everything in order and resumed their cruise.

There was no wind, and it was necessary to take to the oars. The disadvantage of starting at so late an hour soon became painfully plain. The sun was so nearly overhead that the heat was almost unbearable, and there was not a particle of shade. The boys had not had a full night's sleep, and had tired themselves before starting by trying to dig a canal. Of course the labour of rowing in such circumstances was very severe, and it was not long before first one and then another proposed to go ashore and rest in the shade.

"Hadn't we better keep on till we get into the Highlands? We can do it in a quarter of an hour," said Tom.

As Tom was pulling the stroke oar, and doing rather more work than any one else, the others agreed to row on as long as he would row. They soon reached the entrance to the Highlands, and landed at the foot of the great hill called St. Anthony's Nose. They were very glad to make the boat fast to a tree that grew close to the water, and to clamber a little way up the hill into the shade.

"What will we do to pass away the time till it gets cooler?" said Harry, after they had rested awhile.

"I can tell you what I'm going to do," said Tom. "I'm going to get some of the sleep that I didn't get last night, and you'd better follow my example."

All the boys at once found that they were sleepy; and, having brought the tent up from the boat, they spread it on the ground for a bed, and soon were sleeping soundly. The mosquitoes came and feasted on them, and the innumerable insects of the summer woods crawled over them, and explored their necks, shirt-sleeves, and trousers-legs, as is the pleasant custom of insects of an inquiring turn of mind.

"What's that?" cried Harry, suddenly sitting up, as the sound of a heavy explosion died away in long, rolling echoes.

"I heard it," said Joe; "it's a cannon. The cadets up at West Point are firing at a mark with a tremendous big cannon."

"Let's go up and see them," said Jim. "It's a great deal cooler than it was."

With the natural eagerness of boys to be in the neighbourhood of a cannon, they made haste to gather up the tent and carry it to the boat. As they came out from under the thick trees, they saw that the sky in the north was as black as midnight, and that a thunder-storm was close at hand.

"Your cannon, Joe, was a clap of thunder," said Harry. "We're going to get wet again."

"We needn't get wet," said Tom. "If we hurry up we can get the tent pitched and put the things in it, so as to keep them dry."

They worked rapidly, for the rain was approaching fast, but it was not easy to pitch the tent on a side hill. It was done, however, after a fashion, and the blankets and other things that were liable to be injured by the wet were safely under shelter before the storm reached them.





CHAPTER V.

IT was a terrific storm. The wind swept down the river, raising a ridge of white water in its path. The rain came down harder, so the boys thought, than they had ever seen it come down before, and the glare of the lightning and the crash of the thunder were frightful.

"What luck it is that we got the tent pitched in time," exclaimed Joe. "We're as dry and comfortable here as if we were in a house."

"Pick your blankets up quick, boys," cried Harry. "Here's the water coming in under the tent."

Joe had boasted a little too soon. The water running down the side of the hill was making its way in large quantities into the tent. To save their clothes and blankets, the boys had to stand up and hold them in their arms, which was by no means a pleasant occupation, especially as the cold rain-water was bathing their feet.

"It can't last long," remarked Tom. "We're all right if the lightning doesn't strike us."

"Where's the powder?" asked Harry.

"Oh, it's in the flask," replied Joe, "and I've got the flask in my pocket."

"So, if the lightning strikes the tent, we'll all be blown up," exclaimed Harry. "This is getting more and more pleasant."

The boys were not yet at the end of their troubles. The rain had loosened the earth, and the tent-pins, of which only four had been used, were no longer fit to hold the tent.

So, while they were talking about the powder, the tent suddenly blew down, upsetting the boys as it fell, and burying them under the wet canvas.

"Lie still, fellows," said Tom, as the other boys tried to wriggle out from under the tent. "We've got to get wet now, anyway; but perhaps, if we stay as we are, we can manage to keep the blankets dry."

The wet tent felt miserably cold as it clung to their heads and shoulders, but the boys kept under it, and held their blankets and spare shirts wrapped tightly in their arms. Luckily the storm was nearly at an end when the tent blew down, and a few moments later the rain ceased, and the crew of the *Whitewing*, in a very damp condition, crept out and congratulated themselves that they had escaped with no worse injury than a wet skin.

"Where are your rubber blankets?" asked Harry, presently.

"Rolled up with the other blankets," answered everybody.

"It won't do to tell when we get home," remarked Harry, "that, instead of using the waterproof blankets to keep ourselves dry, we used ourselves to keep the waterproofs dry. It's the most stupid thing we've done yet; and I'm as bad as anybody else."

"It was a good deal worse to pitch a tent without digging a trench around it," said Tom. "If I'd dug a trench two inches deep just back of that tent, not a drop of water would have run into it."

"And I don't think much of the plan of using only four pins to hold a tent down when a hurricane is coming on," said Joe.

"And I think the least said by a fellow who carries two pounds of powder in his pocket in a thunderstorm the better," added Jim.

It took some time to bale the water out of the boat, for the rain and the spray from the river had half-filled it. But the shower had cooled the air, and the boys were glad to be at work again after their confinement in the tent. They were soon ready to start; and, rowing easily and steadily, they passed through the Highlands, and reached a nice

camping spot on the east bank of the river below Poughkeepsie, before half-past five.

This time they selected a place to pitch the tent with great care. It was easy to find the high-water mark on the shore, and the tent was pitched a little above it, so as to be safe from a disaster like that of the previous night. Harry wanted it pitched on the top of a high bank ; but the others insisted that, as long as they were safe from the tide, there was no need of putting the tent a long distance from the water, and that they had selected the only spot where they could have a bed of sand to sleep on.

This important business being settled, supper was the next subject of attention.

"We haven't been as regular about our meals as we ought to be," said Harry, "but it hasn't been our fault. We'll have a good supper to-night, at any rate. How would you like some hot turtle-soup ?"

"Just the thing," said Joe. "The bread is beginning to get a little dry ; but we can soak it in the soup."

"About going for milk," continued Harry ; "we ought to arrange that and the other regular duties. Suppose after this we take regular turns. One fellow can pitch the tent, another can go for milk, another can get the firewood, and the other can cook. We can arrange it according to alphabetical order. For instance, Tom Schuyler pitches the tent to-night ; Jim Sharpe goes for milk, Joe gets the firewood, and I cook. The next time we camp, Jim will pitch the tent, Joe will get the milk, I will get the wood, and Tom will cook. Is that fair ?"

The boys said it was, and they agreed to adopt Harry's proposal. Jim went off with the milk-pail, and when the fire was ready, Harry took a can of soup and put it on the coals to be heated.

Jim found a house quite near at hand, where he bought two quarts of milk and a loaf of bread, and was back again at the camp before the soup was ready. He found the boys lying near the fire, waiting for the soup to heat and the coffee to boil.

"That soup takes a long time to heat through," said Tom. "There isn't a bit of steam coming out of it yet."

"How can any steam come out of it when it's soldered up tight?" replied Harry.

"You don't mean to tell me that you've put the can on the fire without punching a hole in the top?"



THE SOUP EXPLOSION.

"Of course I have. What on earth should I punch a hole in it for?"

"Because—" cried Tom, hastily springing up.

But he was interrupted by a report like that of a small cannon : a cloud of ashes rose over the fire, and a shower of soup fell just where Tom had been lying.

"That's the reason why," resumed Tom. "The steam has burst the can, and the soup has gone up."

"We've got another can," said Harry, "and we'll punch a hole in that one. What an idiot I was not to think of its bursting ! It's a good job that it didn't hurt us. I should hate to have the newspapers say that we had been blown up and awfully mangled with soup."

The other can of soup was safely heated, and the boys made a comfortable supper. They drove a stake in the sand, and fastened the boat's painter securely to it, and then "turned in."

"No tide to rouse us up to-night, boys," said Harry, as he rolled himself in his blanket. "I sha'n't wake up till daylight."

"We'd better take an early start," remarked Tom. "We haven't got on very far because we started so late this morning. If we get off by six every morning, we can lie off in the middle of the day, and start again about three o'clock. It's no fun rowing with the sun right overhead."

"Well, it isn't more than eight o'clock now ; and if we take eight hours' sleep, we can turn out at four o'clock," said Harry. "But who is going to wake us up ? Joe and Jim are sound asleep already, and I'm awful sleepy myself. I don't believe one of us will wake up before seven o'clock anyway."

Tom made no answer, for he had dropped asleep while Harry was talking. The latter thought he must be pretending to sleep, and was just resolving to tell Tom that it wasn't very polite to refuse to answer a civil question, when he found himself muttering something about a game of base-ball, and awoke, with a start, to discover that he could not possibly keep awake another moment.

The boys slept on. The moon came out and shone in at the open tent-flap, and the tide rose to high-water mark, but not quite high enough to reach the tent. By-and-by the wheezing of a tow-boat broke the stillness, and occasionally a hoarse steam whistle echoed among the hills ; but the boys

slept so soundly that they would not have heard a locomotive had it whistled its worst within a rod of the tent.

The river had been like a mill-pond since the thunder-storm, but about midnight a heavy swell rolled in toward the shore. It came on, growing larger and larger, and, rushing up the little beach with a fierce roar, dashed into the tent and overwhelmed the sleeping boys without the slightest warning.





CHAPTER VI.

THE wave receded as suddenly as it came. The boys sprang up in a terrible fright, and indeed there are few men who in their place would not have been frightened. The shock of the cold water was enough to startle the strongest nerves, and as the boys rushed to the door of the tent, in a blind race for life, they fully believed that their last hour had come. Before they could get out of the tent, a second wave swept up and rose above their knees. With wild cries of terror the two younger boys caught hold of Tom, and, losing their footing, dragged him down. Harry caught at Tom impulsively, with a vague idea of saving him from drowning, but the only result of his effort was that he went down with the rest. Fortunately the wave receded before the boys had time to drown, and left them struggling in a heap on the wet sand. There was no return of the water, and in a few moments the boys were outside of the tent and on the top of the bluff above the river.

"It must have been a tidal wave," said Jim. "Oh, I'd give anything if I was at home! The water will come up again, and we'll all be drowned!"

"It was the swell of a steamboat," said Tom. "There's the boat now, just going around that point."

"You're right," said Harry. "It was nothing but the swell of the night-boat. What precious fools we were not to think of it before! To-morrow night we'll pitch the tent about a thousand feet above the water."

"Then there'll be a water-spout or something," said Jim.

"We're bound to get wet whatever we do. We only started yesterday, and here we've been wet through three times."

"And Harry has been wet four times, counting the time he jumped in the Harlem for me," added Joe.



THE BOYS BUILT A ROARING FIRE ON A LARGE FLAT ROCK.

"It won't do to stand here and talk about it," said Tom.
"We've got to have a fire or we'll freeze to death. Look at

the way Joe's teeth are chattering. The blankets and clothes are all wet, and the sooner we dry them the sooner we'll get warm."

There happened to be a dead tree near by, and it was soon converted into firewood. The boys built a roaring fire on a large flat rock, and after it had burnt for a little while they pushed it about six feet from the place where they had started it, and, after piling fresh fuel on it, laid down on the hot rock with their feet to the flames. The fire had heated the rock so that they could hardly bear to touch it, but the heat dried their wet clothes rapidly, and kept them from taking severe colds. Meanwhile their blankets had been spread out near the fire, and in half an hour were very nearly dry, and pretty severely scorched. Two large logs were then rolled on the fire, and when they were in a blaze the boys wrapped themselves in their blankets, and, lying as near to the fire as they could without actually burning, resumed their interrupted sleep. They found the rock rather a hard bed, and it offered no temptation to laziness ; so it happened that they were all broad awake at half-past four ; and though somewhat stiff from lying on a rocky bed, were none the worse for their night's adventure.

"There's one thing I'm going to do this very day," said Harry, as they were dressing themselves after their morning swim. "I'm going to write to the Department to send us a big rubber bag, that we can put our spare clothes in and keep them dry. There's no fun in being wet and having nothing dry to put on."

"If we have the bag sent to Albany, it will get there by the time we do," said Tom. "You write the letter while we are getting breakfast."

So Harry wrote to the Department as follows :—

"DEAR UNCLE JOHN,—We've been wet through with a steamboat once, and the tide wet us the first night, and we got rained on, and I jumped in to get Joe out, and we've had a gorgeous time. Please send us a big waterproof bag to put our spare clothes in, so that we can have something dry. Please send it to Albany, and we will stop there at the Post-office for it. Please send it right away. You said the

Department furnished everything. We've been dry twice since we started, but it didn't last long. There never was such fun. All the boys send their love to you. Please don't forget the bag. From your affectionate nephew,
"HARRY."

"This was the morning that you were going to sleep till eight o'clock without waking up, Harry," said Tom, as they were eating their breakfast.

"There's nothing that will wake a fellow up so quick as the Hudson River rolling in on him. I hadn't expected to wake up in that way," answered Harry.

"So far we have done nothing but find out how stupid we are," said Tom. "Seems to me we must have found it pretty near all out by this time. There can't be many more stupid things that we haven't done."

"There won't any accident happen to-night," replied Harry; "for I'll make sure that the tent is pitched so far from the water that we can't be wet again. I wonder if every fellow learns to camp out by getting into scrapes as we do. It is very certain that we won't forget what we learn on this cruise."

"I'm beginning to get tired of ham," exclaimed Joe. "We've been eating ham ever since we started. Let's get some eggs, to-day."

"And some raspberries," suggested Jim. "It's the season for them."

"And let's catch some fish," said Tom.

"That's what we'll do," said Harry. "We'll sail till eleven o'clock, and then we'll go fishing and catch our dinner."

This suggestion pleased everybody; and when, at about six o'clock, they set sail with a nice breeze from the south, everybody kept a look-out for a good fishing-ground, and wondered why they had not thought of fishing before.





CHAPTER VII.



HE sun was getting to be rather too hot for boating when the boys saw the half-sunken wreck of a canal-boat close to the west shore, where there was a nice shady grove. They immediately crossed the river, and, landing near the wreck, began to get their fishing-tackle in order.

As there were only two poles, one of which belonged to Harry, and the other to Tom, the two Sharpe boys were obliged either to cut poles for themselves, or to watch the others while they fished. Jim cut a pole for himself, but Joe preferred to lie on the bank. "I don't care to fish, anyhow," he said. "I'll agree to eat twice as much fish as anybody else, if I can be excused from fishing."

"If you don't want to fish, you'd better hunt bait for us," said Tom.

"I never thought about bait," exclaimed Harry. "How are we going to dig for worms without a spade?"

"Who wants any worms?" replied Tom. "Grasshoppers are the thing; and the field just back of here is full of them. Come, Joe, catch us some grasshoppers, won't you?"

"How many do you want?" asked Joe. "I don't want to waste good grasshoppers on fellows who won't use them. Let's see: suppose I get you ten grasshoppers a-piece. Will that do?"

"Are you getting lazy, Joe?" said Tom, "or are you

sick? A fellow who don't want to fish must have something wrong in his inside. Harry, you'd better give him some medicine."



JOE IS CAUGHT.

"Oh, I'm all right," replied Joe. "I'm a little sleepy to-day, but I'll get your grasshoppers."

Joe took an empty tin can and went in search of grass-

hoppers, while the rest were getting their hooks and lines ready. In a short time he returned, and handed the can to Tom. "There's just thirty-one grasshoppers in that can," said he. "I threw in one for good measure. Now go a-head and fish, and I'll have a nap." So saying, he stretched himself on the ground, and the other boys began to fish.

There were quantities of perch near the old canal-boat, and they bit ravenously at the grasshoppers. It took only about a quarter of an hour to catch nearly three dozen fish. These were more than the boys could possibly eat; and Tom was just going to remark that they had better stop fishing, when they were startled by a loud cry from Joe. Harry, in swinging his line over his head so as to cast out a long way into the river, had succeeded in hooking Joe in the right ear.

Of course, Harry was extremely sorry, and he said so several times; but, as Joe pointed out, "talk won't pull a hook out of a fellow's ear!" The barb made it impracticable to draw the hook out, and it was quite impossible that Joe should enjoy the cruise with a fish-hook in his ear. Jim said that the hook must be cut out; but Joe objected to having his ear cut to pieces with a dull jack-knife. In this emergency Tom proposed to break off the shank of the hook, and then to push the remainder of it through the ear. It was no easy matter, however, to break the steel. Every time the hook was touched, Joe winced with pain; but finally Tom managed to break the shank with the aid of the pair of pliers that formed part of the stores. The hook was then gently and firmly pressed through the ear, and carefully drawn out.

"I knew," said Tom, "that something must be wrong when Joe said he didn't want to fish. This ought to be a warning to him."

"It's a warning to me," said Harry, "not to throw my line all over the State of New York."

"Oh, it's all right now," said Joe. "Only the next time I go cruising with Harry, I'm going to take a pair of cutting pincers to cut off the shanks of fish-hooks after he gets through fishing. We'd better get a pair at Hudson, any-

how, or else we'll all be stuck full of hooks, if Harry does any more fishing."

Harry was so humbled by the result of his carelessness that he offered, by way of penance, to clean and cook the fish. When this was done, and the fish were served up smoking hot, they were so good that Joe forgot his damaged ear, and Harry recovered his spirits. After a course of fish and bread, a can of peaches was opened for dessert, and then followed a good long rest. By three o'clock the heat began to lessen, and the *Whitewing* started on her way with a better breeze than she had yet been favoured with.

The boat travelled swiftly, and the breeze gradually freshened. The whitecaps were beginning to make their appearance on the river before it occurred to the boys that they must cross over to the east shore, in order to camp where they could find shade while getting breakfast the next morning. It had been one of Uncle John's most earnest bits of advice that they should always have shade in the morning. "Nothing spoils the temper," he had said, "like cooking under a bright sun; so make sure that you keep in the shade until after breakfast." Harry felt a little nervous about crossing the river in so fresh a breeze, since, as the breeze blew from the south, the boat could not sail directly across the river without bringing the sea on her beam. He did not mention that he was nervous, however, and he showed excellent judgment in crossing the river diagonally, so as to avoid exposing the broadside of the boat to the waves, that by this time were unpleasantly high. The east bank was thus reached without taking a drop of water into the boat, and she was then kept on her course up the river, within a few rods of the shore.

This was a wise precaution in one respect; for, if the boat had capsized, the boys could easily have swum ashore; but still it is always risky to keep close to the shore, unless you know that there are no rocks or snags in the way. Harry never thought of the danger of being shipwrecked with the shore so close at hand, and was enjoying the cooling breeze and the speed of the boat, when suddenly the *Whitewing* brought up with a crash that pitched everybody into the bottom of the boat. She had struck a

sunken rock, and the speed at which she was going was so great that one of her planks was stove in. Before the boys could pick themselves up, the water had rushed in, and was rising rapidly. "Jump overboard, everybody!" cried Harry. "She won't float with us in her." There was no time in which to pull off shirts and trousers, and the boys plunged overboard without even taking their hats off. They then took hold of the boat, two on each side of her, and swam toward the shore. With so much water in her, the boat was tremendously heavy; but the boys persevered, and finally reached shallow water, where they could wade and drag her out on the sand.

"Here we are, wet again!" exclaimed Jim. "The blankets are wet, too, this time."

"Never mind," replied Tom. "It's not more than five o'clock, and we can get them dry before night."

"We'll have to work pretty fast, then," said Harry. "Jim and Joe had better build a big fire and dry the things, while you and I empty the boat; or I'll empty the boat, and you can pitch the tent. We'll have to put off supper till we can make sure of a dry bed."

Harry took the things out of the boat one by one. Everything was wet except the contents of the tin boxes, into which the water luckily had not penetrated. As soon as the fire was built, Jim and Joe gave their whole attention to drying the blankets and the spare clothing; and when the boat was emptied, it was found that a hole nearly six inches long and four inches wide had been made through one of the bottom planks. Harry and Tom set to work to mend it. They took a piece of canvas—which had luckily been kept in one of the tin boxes and was quite dry—and tacked it neatly over the outside of the hole. They next covered the canvas with a thin coating of white-lead, except at the edges, where the white-lead was laid on very thickly. Over the canvas the piece of zinc that had been brought for just such a purpose was carefully tacked, and then thin strips of wood were placed over the edges of the tin, and screwed down tightly with screws that went through the zinc, but not through the canvas. Finally, white-lead was put all around the outer edge of the zinc, and the boat was

then left bottom-side up on the sand, so that the white-lead could harden by exposure to the air.

Nobody cared to go for milk in wet clothes ; and so, when the boat was mended, the boys all sat round the fire to dry themselves, and made a supper of crackers. What with the heat and the wind, it was not very long before their clothes and blankets were thoroughly dried ; and they could look forward to a comfortable night. The tent was pitched where no steamboat could possibly touch it, and the boat was apparently out of reach of the tide. It was very early when the boys "turned in," and for the first time in the cruise they slept peacefully all night.





CHAPTER VIII.

THE next morning the boys awoke early, having had a thoroughly good night's rest. Tom, whose turn it was to go for milk, found a well-stocked farmhouse, where he obtained not only milk, bread, and eggs, but a supply of butter and a chicken all ready for cooking. After breakfast the boat was put in the water, and, to the delight of all, proved to be almost as tight as she was before running into the rock. A little water came in at first under the edges of the zinc, but in a short time the wood swelled, and the leak entirely ceased.

The boat was loaded, and the boys were ready to start soon after six o'clock. There was no wind, but the two long oars, pulled one by Tom and the other by Jim, sent her along at a fine rate. They rowed until ten o'clock, resting occasionally for a few moments, and then, as there were no signs of a breeze, and as it was growing excessively hot, they went ashore, to wait until afternoon before resuming their journey.

The sun became hotter and hotter. The boys tried to fish, but there was no shade near the bank of the river, and it was too hot to stand or sit in the sunshine and wait for fish to bite. They went in swimming, but the sun, beating on their heads, seemed hotter while they were in the water than it did when they were on the land. Jim and Joe tried a game of mumble-the-peg, but they gave it up long before they had reached "ears." It was probably the hottest day of the year; and as it was clearly impossible to row or to

do anything else while the heat lasted; the boys brought their blankets from the boat, and, going to a grove not far from the shore, lay down and fell asleep.



MUMBLE-THE-PEG.

They were astonished to find, when they awoke, that it was two o'clock. None of them had been accustomed to sleep in the daytime, and they could not understand how it

came about that they had all slept for fully two hours. They had yet to learn that one of the results of "camping out," or living in the open air, is an ability to sleep at almost any time. All animals and wild creatures, whether they are beasts or savages, have this happy faculty of sleeping in the daytime. It is one of the habits of our savage ancestors that comes back to us when we abandon civilisation, and live as Aryan tribes, from whom we are descended, lived in the Far East, before they marched with their wives and children and cattle from India, and made themselves new homes in Europe.

After lunch the boys prepared to start, although there was still no wind; but when they went down to the boat they found that the sun was as hot as ever. So they returned to the shade of the grove, and made up their minds to stay there until the end of the afternoon.

"Harry," said Tom, "we've been on the river three days, and we are only a little way above Hudson. How much longer will it be before we get to Albany?"

"We ought to get there in two days more, even if we have to row all the way," replied Harry.

"And after we get to Albany, what are we to do next?"

"We are going up the Champlain Canal to Fort Edward. There we will have a waggon to carry us and the boat to Warrensburg, on the Schroon River, and will go up the river to Schroon Lake. Uncle John laid out the route for us."

"How many days will it take us to get to the lake?" asked Tom.

Harry thought awhile. "There's two days more on the Hudson, two on the canal, and maybe two on the Schroon River. And then there's a Sunday, which don't count. It'll be just a week before we get to the lake."

"I've got to be home by two weeks from next Monday," continued Tom, "so I shan't have much time on the lake. Can't we get along a little faster? There's a full moon to-night, and suppose we sail all night—or row, if the wind doesn't come up."

"That's a first-rate idea," exclaimed Harry. "We can take turns sleeping in the bottom of the boat. Why, if the

breeze comes up in the night, we might make twenty or thirty miles before morning."

All the boys liked the plan of sailing at night, and they resolved to adopt it. While they were yet discussing it, a light breeze sprang up, from the south as usual, and they hastened to take advantage of it. In the course of an hour more the sun began to lose its power; and when they went ashore at six o'clock to cook their supper, they had sailed about fifteen miles.

As they expected to make so much progress during the night, they were in no hurry about supper, and it was not until after seven o'clock that they again made sail. Harry divided the crew into watches—one consisting of himself and Joe Sharpe, and the other of Tom and Jim. Each watch was to have charge of the boat for three hours, while the other watch slept. At eight o'clock Tom and Jim lay down in the bottom of the boat, and Joe came aft to take Tom's customary place at the sheet. Harry, of course, steered.

All went well. The breeze was light but steady, and Harry kept the boat in the middle of the river to avoid another shipwreck. The watch below did not sleep much, for they had had a long nap at noon, and, besides, the novelty of their position made them wakeful. They had just dropped asleep when eleven o'clock arrived, and they were awakened to relieve the other watch. Tom went sleepily to the helm, and Harry and Joe gladly "turned in," and were soon fast asleep.

Tom always declares that he never closed his eyes while he was at the helm, and Jim also asserts that he was wide awake during his entire watch, though neither he nor Tom spoke for fear of waking up the other boys. It was strange that these two wide-awake young Moral Pirates did not notice that a large steamboat—one of the Albany night-boats—was in sight, until she was within a mile of them, and it is just possible that, without knowing it, they were a little too drowsy to keep a proper look-out.

As soon as Tom saw the steamboat, he remarked, "Hallo! there's one of the Albany boats," and steered the boat over toward the east shore. The breeze had nearly

died away, and the *Whitewing* moved very slowly. The steamboat came rapidly down the river, her paddles throbbing loudly in the night air. Jim began to get a little uneasy, and said, "I hope she won't run us down." "Oh, there's no danger!" replied Tom; "we shall get out of her way easy enough." But, to his dismay, the steamboat, instead of keeping in the middle of the river, presently turned toward the east shore, as if she were bent on running down the *Whitewing*. Tom was now really alarmed; and as he saw that the sail was doing very little good, he hurriedly told Jim to take down the mast and get out the oars as quickly as possible. Jim rapidly obeyed the order, dropping the mast on Harry's head, and catching Joe by the nose in his search for the oars. By this time Tom had begun to hail the steamboat at the top of his lungs; but no attention was paid to him by the steamboat men, since the noise of the paddles drowned Tom's voice. Harry and Joe, who were now wide awake, saw what danger they were in, and they sprang to the oars. The steamboat was frightfully near, and still hugging the shore; but Tom called on the boys to give way with their oars, and steered straight for the shore, knowing that there must be room for the boat between the steamboat and the bank of the river, and fearing that if he steered in the opposite direction the steamboat might change her course and run them down, when they would have little chance of escape by swimming. It was certainly very doubtful if they could avoid the steamboat, and Tom was well aware of it. He told the other boys that, if they were sure to be run down, they must jump before the steamboat struck them, and dive, so as to escape the paddles. "I'll tell you when to jump, if worst comes to worst," said he; "but don't you look around now, nor do anything but row. Row for your lives, boys."

And the boys did row gallantly. Harry had a pair of sculls, and Jim had a long oar, and between them they made the boat fly through the water. As they neared the shore, it seemed to them that there was not more than three feet of space between the steamboat and the land; and Tom had almost made up his mind that the cruise was

coming to a sudden end, when the great steamboat swung her head around, and drew out toward the middle of the river. She did not seem to be more than a rod from them as she changed her course, though in reality she was probably much farther off. At the same moment the *Whitewing* reached what appeared to be the shore, but what was really a long row of piles projecting about a foot above the water. The boys had just ceased rowing, and Tom had given the boat a sheer with the rudder, so as to bring her alongside of the piles, when the steamboat's swell, which the boys, in their excitement over their narrow escape, had totally forgotten, came rushing up, seized the boat, and threw it over the piles into a shallow and muddy lagoon.

It was almost miraculous that the boat was not capsized ; but she was actually lifted up and thrown over the piles, without taking more than a few quarts of spray into her. When they saw that they were absolutely safe, the boys began to wonder how in the world they could get the boat back into the river, and Jim proposed to light the lantern and see if anything was missing out of the boat, and if she had been injured.

"Now I see why the steamboat did not notice us," exclaimed Tom.

"Why?" asked all the others together.

"Because," he replied, "we have been such everlasting idiots as to sail at night without showing a light."





CHAPTER IX.

THE boat was in a shallow part of the river, between the shore and a long row of piles that marked the steamboat channel. Harry sounded with an oar, and found that the water was only two feet deep.

"We'll have to get overboard and drag the boat over the piles," said he, "and it's going to be a mighty hard job, too. That swell threw us over as neat as the bull threw Joe over the fence up at Lenox last summer."

"When I got pitched over that fence I stayed there," said Joe. "I didn't try to get back into the field where the bull was, and I don't see what we want to get back where the steamboats are for."

"That's so," exclaimed Harry. "We're safe enough here. Let's get the water out of the boat, and keep on this side of the piles."

When the boat was made dry, and the lighted lantern was hoisted to the top of the mast, Tom resumed his place at the helm, and Harry and Joe prepared to take another nap. "I don't want to grumble," said Joe, "but I wish I didn't have to lie on the coffee-pot and a tin cup. I don't feel comfortable on that kind of bed."

"I'll change with you if you like," replied Harry. "I'm sleeping on a beautiful soft bottle of oil, and some sardine boxes, but I don't want to be selfish and keep the best bed for myself."

"Oh, never mind," returned Joe. "I'll manage to sleep if

Jim don't step on my face. I always did hate to have anybody step on my face when I was asleep."

"Well, good-night everybody," said Harry. "I'm going



LIFTING THE BOAT OVER THE PILES.

straight to sleep. Tom, be sure you wake me up if a steam-boat tries to climb over these piles."

This time Tom did not fall asleep at the helm, but the wind gradually died away, and the sail hung limp and useless. Jim got out the oars without stepping on anybody, and rowed slowly on. In a little while they came to the end of the shallow lagoon into which the swell had so unexpectedly cast them. A sand-bank stretched from the shore to the line of piles, and it was impossible to go any further. Tom decided to make the boat fast to the limb of a willow-tree that projected over the water, and to go ashore and sleep on the sand. Neither he nor Jim thought it worth while to wake the other boys; so they gathered up their blankets, crept quietly out of the boat, and were soon asleep on the soft, warm sand. When Harry and Joe awoke at daylight, stiff and cramped, they were disposed to be rather indignant at Tom and Jim, who were sleeping so comfortably on the sand; but Tom soon convinced them that he had acted from the best of motives, and they readily forgave him.

Of course breakfast was the first business of the day, and after that was finished the boat had to be entirely unloaded before she could be lifted over the piles into the channel. For the first time since they had started on the cruise the breeze was ahead, but it was so light that it was of very little consequence. The sky was cloudy, and the day promised to be a cool one; so the boys resolved to take to their oars and try, if possible, to reach Albany before night. When the boat was loaded, Tom and Jim each took a long oar, and Harry took his usual seat in the stern-sheets. They all felt fresh in spite of their night's adventure, and started gaily on their intended long day's row.

By this time they had found out that, although round tin boxes were very well to keep things dry, they are by no means handy to carry in a boat. Their shape made it impossible to stow them compactly. Joe, who sat at the bow, always had to pick his way over these tin boxes in going to or coming from his station; and he was constantly catching his foot in the spaces left between the boxes, and falling down on them. This smashed in the covers, and tried Joe's temper sorely. Once he sat down so violently on the box which held the sugar, that he went completely

through the cover, and was fastened in the box as securely as a cork in a bottle. He was only released after a great deal of work, and just in time to enable the boys to have sugar in their coffee at night. Harry resolved that he would never cruise again with round boxes, but would have small rubber bags made, in which to put everything that required to be kept dry.

The boys took turns at the oars every hour, and rowed steadily until noon. They gave themselves an hour for lunch and resting, and then resumed their work. Late in the afternoon they came in sight of Albany, and went ashore, so as to get their dinner before reaching the city. After dinner they again pulled away at the oars, and at about nine o'clock they stopped at a lumber-yard on the outskirts of Albany, and, creeping in among the lumber, wrapped their blankets around them, and dropped asleep, completely worn out, but proud of their long day's row.

Before sunrise the next morning, Tom was awakened by a stick which was thrust into his ribs. Without opening his eyes, he muttered, "You quit that, or I'll get up and pound you!" and immediately dropped asleep again. Somebody then kicked him so sharply that he roused himself up, and, opening his eyes, was dazzled by the gleam of a bull's-eye lantern. He could not at first imagine where he was; but, as he presently found that a big policeman had him by the collar, and was calling him "an impudent young thief," he began to imagine that something was wrong.

"I've got you this time," said the policeman, "and the whole gang of you. Where did you steal that property in your boat from, you precious young river pirate?"

"We're not river pirates," replied Tom. "We're Moral Pirates, and we brought those things in the boat with us from New York."

"Well, I like your cheek!" said the officer; "owning up that you're pirates. Now just you and your gang take everything out of that boat and let me see what you've got. If any of you try to escape, I'll put a bullet into you. You hear me?"

The other boys had been awakened by the loud voice of

the policeman, and were staring at him in utter astonishment.

"He thinks we're river thieves," said Tom. "Harry, we'll have to show him what we've got in the boat, and then he'll see his mistake."

Harry eagerly assured the policeman that they had come from New York on a pleasure cruise, and had nothing in the boat except provisions and stores. "That's a pretty story," said the officer. "You can tell that to the court. Your boat's full of junk that you've stolen from somewhere; and you'd better hand it out mighty quick!"

The boys were thus compelled to unload their boat, while the policeman stood over them with his club in one hand and his lantern in the other. He was not a stupid man, and he soon perceived that the boys had told him the truth; they were not the gang of river thieves for whom he had mistaken them. He therefore apologised, in a rough way, and even helped the boys repack the boat.

"What I can't understand," said he, "is why you boys come here and sleep in a lumber-yard, when you might be sleeping at home in your beds. Now if you were thieves, you couldn't get any better lodgings, you know; but you're gentlemen's sons, and you ought to know better. Why don't you go down to the hotel and live like gentlemen? Where's the fun in being arrested, and taking up my valuable time?"

The boys assured him that they had never enjoyed themselves more than they had while on the cruise, and after a little more talk the officer turned slowly away.

"By the bye," he exclaimed, suddenly turning back again, "one of you told me you were pirates. I ought to take you in, after all. I believe you're a lot of boys that have been reading dime novels, and have run away from home."

"I didn't say we were pirates," replied Tom. "I said we were Moral Pirates. That's a very different thing."

"Of course it is," said Joe. "A Moral Pirate is a sort of missionary, you know. I'm afraid you don't go to Sunday-school, officer, or you'd know better."

The policeman could not quite make up his mind whether Joe was in joke or in earnest; but as he could find no real

reason for arresting the boys, he contented himself with telling them to leave the lumber-yard as soon as the sun rose. "And you'd better look out," he added, "that you don't come across any real river thieves. They'll make no bones of seizing your boat, and knocking you on the head if you make any noise." When he was fairly out of sight, the boys crept back to their shelter among the lumber, and coolly went to sleep again. They were so tired that neither policemen nor river thieves had any terrors for them.





CHAPTER X.

THE policeman did not return, and the boys slept until an hour after sunrise. They then rowed down the river to the steamboat landing, where they left their boat in charge of a boatman and went to an hotel for breakfast. The waiters were rather astonished at the tremendous appetites displayed by the four sunburnt boys, and there is no doubt that the landlord lost money that morning. After breakfast Harry went to the express-office, where he found a large waterproof india-rubber bag, which the Department had sent in answer to his letter. At the post-office were letters from home for all the boys, and a postal order for ten dollars from Uncle John for the use of the expedition. Harry had no idea that this money would be needed, but it subsequently proved to be very useful.

Quite a quantity of stores were bought at Albany, for the voyage up the Hudson had lasted longer than any one had supposed it would, and the provisions were getting low. No unnecessary time was spent in buying these stores, for a fair wind was blowing, and all the boys were anxious to take advantage of it. By ten o'clock they were again afloat; and soon after noon they reached Troy and entered the canal.

The canal basin was crowded with canal-boats, and to avoid accidents the *Whitewing's* mast was taken down, and the oars were got out. Harry knew that, in order to pass through the locks, it would be necessary to pay toll, and to procure an order from the canal authorities directing the

lockmen to permit the *Whitewing* to pass. The canal boatmen, of whom he made inquiries, told him where to find the office, which was some little distance up the canal. When the office was reached, an officer came and inspected the boat, asked a great many questions about the cruise up the Hudson, and seemed to be very much interested in the expedition. He told the boys that the water was low in the Champlain Canal, and that the lockmen might not be willing to open the locks for so small a boat; but that they could avoid all dispute by entering the locks at the same time with some one of the many canal-boats that were on their way north. He charged the *Whitewing* the enormous sum of twenty-five cents for tolls, and gave Harry an important-looking order by which the lockmen were directed to allow the skiff *Whitewing*, Captain Harry Wilson, to pass through all the locks on the canal.

Thanking the pleasant officer, the boys pushed off. After they had passed the place where the Champlain Canal branches off from the Erie Canal, they were no longer troubled by a crowd of canal-boats, and were able to set the sail again. Unluckily, the mast was just a little too high to pass under the bridges, and at the first bridge which they met they narrowly escaped a capsize—Jim succeeding in getting the mast down only just in time to save it from striking the bridge. They had hardly set sail again when another bridge came in sight, and they could see just beyond it a third bridge. It would never do to stop at every bridge and unship the mast; so Harry went on shore, borrowed a saw from a cooper's shop, and sawed six inches off from the top of the mast, after which the bridges gave them no more trouble.

The boys were very much interested in passing the first lock. They slipped into the lock behind a big canal-boat, which left just room enough between its rudder and the gate for the *Whitewing*. When the lockmen shut the gate behind the boat, and opened the sluices in the upper gate, the water rose slowly and steadily. The sides of the lock were so steep and black that the boys felt very much as if they were at the bottom of a well; but it was not many minutes before the water had risen so high that the upper

gates were opened, and the big canal-boat and its little follower were released.

Passing through a lock in a small boat, and in company



GOING THROUGH THE LOCK.

with a canal-boat, is not a perfectly safe thing to do ; for if the ropes which fasten the canal-boat should break—which they sometimes do—the water rushing in through the

sluices would force the canal-boat against the lower gate, and crush the small boat like an egg-shell. It is therefore best always to pass through a lock alone, or in company with other small boats. The danger, however, is in reality very slight, and very few accidents occur in canal locks.

The wind died away before sunset ; and the boys having had only a light lunch, which they ate on the boat, were glad to go ashore for supper. They bought some corn from a farmer, and roasted it before the fire, while some nice slices of ham were frying, and the coffee-pot was boiling, and so prepared a supper which they greatly enjoyed. The moon came up before they had finished the meal, and they felt strongly tempted to make another attempt at night-work.

"I'll tell you what we can do," exclaimed Harry. "Instead of rowing, let's tow the boat. One fellow can tow while another steers, and the rest can sleep in the boat."

"All right," said Joe. "I'm willing to be a mule. Only I'd like to know where my harness is coming from."

"We've got rope enough for that," replied Harry. "I'll take the first turn, and tow for an hour, while Joe steers ; then I'll steer for an hour, while Joe tows. Then the other watch will take charge of the boat for two hours, and Joe and I will sleep."

"If I'm to sleep on the bottom of that boat," said Joe, "I want some nice sharp stones to sleep on. I'm tired of sleeping on coffee-pots, and want a change."

A long tow-line was soon rigged on Harry's shoulders in such a way that it did not chafe him ; a space in the bottom of the boat was cleared of coffee-pots and other uncomfortable articles, and a pair of blankets was spread on the bottom board, so as to make a comfortable bed, which Tom and Jim hastened to occupy. Joe took the yoke-lines in his hand, and called to Harry to go ahead. When Harry first tugged at the tow-line, the boat seemed very heavy ; but as soon as she was in motion, Harry found that he could tow her as fast as he could walk, and without any difficulty.

Had the locks been open and the canal-boats been out of the way, the experiment of towing the *Whitewing* at night would have been very successful. As it happened, the locks were kept closed during the night, because the water

was low ; and the canal-boats, not being able to pass the locks, were moored to the tow-path. These boats gave Harry and Joe a great deal of trouble. When one of them was met, Harry had to unharness himself and toss the rope into the boat, and Joe had to get out an oar and scull around the obstacle. This happened so often that Tom and Jim got very little sleep ; and long before it was time for them to resume duty, a lock was reached, and Harry had to call all hands to drag the boat around it.

This was a hard piece of work. First, all the heavy things had to be taken out of the boat and carried around the lock. Then the boat had to be dragged out of the canal on to the tow-path ; hauled up a steep ascent, and launched above the upper gate. It took a good half-hour to pass the first of these closed locks, and when the boat was again ready to start, it was time to change the watch.

Tom and Jim had managed to get only a few minutes' sleep, but Harry and Joe could not sleep a single wink. They had not "turned in" for more than ten minutes when another lock was reached. This involved a second half-hour of hard work by all hands, and twenty minutes later three more locks close together blocked the way. It was foolish to persevere in dragging the boat around locks all night long ; so, after getting her out of the canal on the side opposite to the tow-path, the boys dragged her behind some bushes, where the canal-boatmen could not see her at daylight. They then spread their rubber blankets on the ground, and prepared to sleep through the remaining four or five hours of darkness.

"Boys," said Joe, suddenly, "does it hurt a fat woman to jump on her?"

"Don't know," answered Harry. "What do you ask for?"

"Oh, nothing," said Joe. "Only when I was jumping from one canal-boat to another while I was a mule, I landed awfully heavy on a fat woman who was sleeping on deck."

"What did she do?" asked Harry.

"She didn't do anything. She just muttered something

that I could not understand, and I got away as quickly as possible."

"Well, if she likes it, that's her business, not yours," suggested Harry. "Go to sleep, do!"

"I am going to sleep; but I don't think we ought to spend our nights in getting run down by steamboats and jumping on strange fat women. I'm sure it isn't right. There, you needn't throw any more shoes at me! I won't say another word."





CHAPTER XI.

BOYS," said Tom, as he was kindling the fire the next morning, "do you know what day it is?"
"Saturday, of course," replied the others.
"You're wrong; it's Sunday."
"It can't be," exclaimed Harry.
"But it is," persisted Tom. "Last night was the sixth night that we've slept out-doors, and we started on a Monday."

Tom was right; but it was some time before his companions could convince themselves that it was actually Sunday. When they finally admitted that it was Sunday morning, they gave up the idea of proceeding up the canal, and began to discuss what they had better do.

The boat, which had been drawn out of the water the night before, was concealed by a clump of bushes from the canal-boatmen. The boys decided to leave it where it was, and to carry the tent and most of their baggage to a grove a quarter of a mile distant, where they could pass a quiet Sunday. The locks were not yet opened, and no canal-boats were stirring, and the boys made their way to the grove at once while their movements were unobserved. They were afraid that if they attracted the attention of the boatmen to the clump of bushes some one would steal the *Whitewing* while her crew were absent. They had already seen enough of the "canalers" to know that they were a wild and lawless set of men, and they were not anxious to put the temptation of stealing a nice boat in their way.

The grove was a delightful place; and when they had

pitched the tent under the shadow of the great oak-trees, they were glad of the prospect of a good day's rest. Tom and Harry walked nearly a mile to church in the morning, leaving the Sharpe boys to look after the camp, and they all slept most of the afternoon.

As soon as the next day began to dawn, Harry, who was on sentry duty, called his comrades, and thus they were enabled to get breakfast early, and to start before six o'clock. They had to wait half-an-hour for the first lock to be opened, but after that they had no difficulty in passing through the other locks. They rowed steadily, taking turns at the oars, and occasionally fastening the boat to the stern of a canal-boat, which would tow them while they took a short rest. Early in the afternoon they reached Fort Edward, where they disembarked; and Harry and Tom went in search of a team, which they hired to carry them to Warrensburg, on the Schroon branch of the Hudson.

When the teamster drove down to the bank of the canal, Tom and the Sharpe boys began to unload the boat. Harry stopped them.

"There isn't any use in taking the things out of the boat," said he. "We can draw her out of the canal and put her on the waggon just as she is."

"Her stern will dip under when we haul her bow out," said Tom.

"No, it won't," replied Harry.

"Let's take the things out of the stern-sheets, anyhow," urged Tom. "All our shoes are there, and we can't afford to lose them."

"Nothing will happen to them," answered Harry, confidently. "It's my boat, and I'm going to haul her out with the things in her."

Tom said no more, but took hold of the bow of the boat with the others, and they began to pull her out of the water. As Tom had prophesied, when she was about half-way out her stern dipped under, the water poured in, and nearly everything in the after-part of the boat floated out. The harm was done now, so the boys hastily dragged the boat up the bank, and then began to lament their losses.

There was not a shoe left, except the shoes that Harry and Tom had put on when they went in search of the team. The mast and sail and two oars were floating on the water, and a quantity of small articles, including the tin frying-pans and a tin pail, had shared the fate of the shoes, and were lying at the bottom of the canal.

"It was my fault," said Harry; "and I beg everybody's pardon. I'll strip and duck for the things till I find them." So saying, he threw off his clothes and sprang into the canal.

Joe, who was, next to Harry, the best swimmer of the party, followed his example; and a number of the villagers and "canalers" collected on the tow-path to watch the divers.

The canal was not more than eight feet deep, but the bottom was very muddy, and the boys had to feel about in the mud with their feet for the lost articles. They were very fortunate, and before long succeeded in recovering all the shoes, except one of Joe's, and several other things.

Meanwhile Tom and Jim were busily baling out the boat, and arranging the wet things so that the sun could dry them. They were so busy that they forgot all about Harry and Joe.

Presently Tom said, "Hark! I think I hear somebody calling."

They listened, and presently they heard a voice in the distance calling, "Tom! Jim! boys! somebody! Bring us our clothes!"

"It's Harry and Joe!" exclaimed Tom. "Where on earth are they?"

They looked up the canal, and finally discovered a naked arm waving frantically from behind a barn that stood near the water.

"They must be behind that barn," said Tom. "I'll take their clothes to them right away." So saying, Tom gathered up the shirts, trousers, and hats of the two unhappy divers, and ran with them to their owners. He found Harry and Joe crouched behind the barn, chattering with cold and surrounded by clouds of eager mosquitoes.

The boys hurriedly dressed themselves, and returning to

the boat helped to put it on the waggon ; and with the wet shoes hanging from the cart-rungs they started on their ride to Warrensburg. It was a hot and tedious ride, and as the



BEHIND THE BARN.

waggon had no springs, the boys were bumped so terribly that they ached all over. They tried to sing, but the words were bumped out of them in the most startling way ; and

after singing one verse of the Star-spangled Banner in this fashion,

“The St-t-tar-spangl-led-led ba-a-an-na-na—”
they gave it up.

About four o'clock they reached Warrensburg, and after getting some dry sugar to replace that which had been mixed with canal water, they launched the boat and rowed up the river. They found it a narrow stream, with a rapid current and a good depth of water. After their tiresome ride the smooth motion of the boat seemed delightful, and they were really sorry when they found it was so late that they must camp for the night.

They chose a pleasant sandy spot between the river and the edge of a thick wood. The opposite bank was also thickly wooded, and they felt as if they were in the depths of a wilderness; though, in reality, there were houses quite near at hand. They pitched their tent, made a good supper—of which they were in need, for they had eaten very little at noon—and then “turned in.”

For some reason Joe was not sleepy; and after having lain awake a long time while the other boys were sleeping soundly, he began to feel lonesome. He heard a great many mysterious noises, as any one who lies awake in a tent always does. The melancholy call of the loon sounded ghostly, and the sighing of the wind in the trees seemed to him like the breathing of huge animals. After awhile he found himself getting nervous as well as lonesome, and imagined that he saw shadows of strange objects passing in front of the tent. By-and-by he distinctly heard the twigs and branches crackling, as somebody or something moved through the woods. The noise came nearer, and suddenly it flashed upon Joe that a bear was approaching the tent. He crept carefully to the opening, and putting his head out, saw indistinctly a large animal moving slowly in the shadow of the bushes only three or four rods from the tent.

Joe lost no time in waking up the other boys, cautioning them as he did so not to make the least noise. “There’s a bear close by the tent,” he whispered. “I’ve been listening to him for a long while, and just now I saw him.”

Harry immediately grasped the gun, both barrels of which he had loaded before going to sleep. Tom wished that he had the hatchet, but as it had been left in the boat, he had no weapon but his penknife. Thus armed, the two crept stealthily out of the tent to fight the bear, leaving Joe and Jim in a very unhappy state of mind, with nothing to defend themselves against the bear, in case he should attack the tent, except a tooth-brush and a lantern.

The outline of the animal could be seen, but Tom and Harry could not make out which end of it was its head. "You must shoot him just behind the shoulder," whispered Tom. "That's the only spot where you can kill a bear." Harry said nothing, but watched carefully to see the animal move. Presently it threw up either its head or tail—the boys could not tell which—and started towards the tent. Harry forgot all about shooting at the shoulder, but in his excitement fired at the animal generally, without picking out any particular spot in which to plant his shot.

The effect of the shot was surprising. The bear set up a tremendous bellow, and by the flash of the gun the boys saw their dreaded enemy galloping away, with his horns and tail in the air. Tom burst into a loud laugh. "Come out, Joe," he cried. "Your bear's gone home to be milked—that is, if Harry hasn't mortally wounded her."

Fortunately, Harry had made a miss, and he found his whole charge of shot the next morning in the trunk of a big white birch-tree. The innocent cow that Joe had mistaken for a bear was, however, so thoroughly frightened that she did not come near the camp again.

"I stick to it that it was a bear!" said Joe, as the boys were wrapping themselves in their blankets. "Cows go to roost at sunset. Suppose it did bellow: how do you know that bears don't bellow when they are shot?"

"How about the horns, Joe?" asked Tom.

"There's horned owls—why shouldn't there be horned bears? Anyway, I believe it was a bear, and I shall stick to it." And to this day Joe believes—or thinks he does—that he had a very narrow escape from a ferocious bear on the banks of the Schroom.



CHAPTER XII.

THE cruise up the Schroon was a delightful one while it lasted. The river was so narrow that the trees on either side frequently met, forming a green and shady arch. Although there was a road not far from the river, and there were houses and small villages at a little distance from its banks, the boys while in their boat saw nothing but the water, the trees, and the sky, and felt as far removed from civilisation as if they were sailing on an African river. They did not see anything to shoot, after their adventure with Joe's bear, and there were no signs of fish in the water ; but they delighted in the wild, solitary river, and were very much disappointed when, at the close of the day, they reached a dam so high that it seemed hopeless to try to carry the boat around it.

Before camping they walked some distance above the dam, and found that the river was completely blocked up with logs, which had been cut in the forest above, and floated down to the saw-mill. The men at the mill said that the boys would find the river choked with logs for a distance of nearly three miles, and that a little farther up it became a mere brook, too shallow and rapid to be navigated by the *Whitewing*.

It was clear that the cruise on the Schroon had come to an end, and that it would be necessary to hire a waggon to take the boat to the lake. Having reached this decision, the boys made their camp, and being very tired, put off engaging a team until morning.

When morning came, one of the men at the mill came to see them while they were at breakfast, and advised them not to go to Schroon Lake. He said that the lake was full of houses—by which he meant that there were a great many houses along its banks—and that if they were to go there they would find neither shooting nor fishing. He urged them to go to another lake which they had never heard of before—Brandt Lake. It was no farther off than Schroon Lake, and was full of fish. Besides, it was a wild mountain lake, with only two or three houses near it. The boys thanked him, and gladly accepted his advice. They had supposed that Schroon Lake was in the wilderness, and were exceedingly glad to find out their mistake in time to select a more attractive place. The owner of the saw-mill furnished them with a waggon, and soon after breakfast they started for Brandt Lake.

When, after a pleasant ride, they came in sight of the lake, they were overjoyed to find how wild and beautiful it was. Steep and thickly-wooded hills surrounded it, except at the extreme southern point, where they launched their boat. It was not more than two miles wide at the widest part, and was about five miles in length, and they could see but two houses—one on the east, and the other on the west shore. They eagerly hoisted the sail, and started up the lake to search for a permanent camping-ground; and, after spending the afternoon in examining almost the entire line of shore, they selected a little rocky island in the upper part of the lake, which seemed made for their purpose.

There was a great deal of work to be done, for they intended to stay at Brandt Lake for a fortnight. They had to clear away the underbush, and cut down several small trees to make room for the tent. Then a small landing-place had to be built of stones and logs, so that the boat could approach the island without striking on the sharp rocks which surrounded it. Then the stores were all to be taken out of the boat, and placed where they would be dry and easy of access. The provisions had by this time become nearly exhausted; but the boys had been told that they could get milk, eggs, butter, bread, and vegetables at one of the houses which was not more than a mile from the

camp, so they were not troubled to find that of their canned provisions nothing was left except a can of peaches.

Of course all this work was not done in one day. On the afternoon of their arrival at the lake the boys merely pitched the tent, and then went fishing with a view to supper. Fishing with drop lines from a large rock at one end of their little island, they caught perch as fast as they could pull them in, good-sized pickerel, and two or three cat-fish. That night they ate a supper that would have made a boarding-house keeper weep tears of despair, and went to bed rather happier than they had ever felt before.

Tom was to row over to the house for milk and other provisions in the morning; but when morning came the boat was gone. She had broken loose during the night, not having been properly fastened, and floated quietly away. A faint speck was visible on the surface of the lake about two miles away, which Harry, who had remarkably good eyes, said was the *Whitewing*. Whether he was right or wrong, it was quite certain that the boys were imprisoned on the island, with nothing to eat but a can of peaches and some coffee and sugar.

The fish, however, were waiting to be caught, and before very long a breakfast of fish and of coffee without milk was ready. The boys then began to discuss the important question of how they were to get back their boat, or to get away from the island.

It was a mile to the shore, and nobody felt able to swim that distance. Joe proposed that they fasten one of their shirts to a tall tree, as a signal of distress, and then fire the gun every minute. The objection to this plan was that the nearest house was out of sight behind a little point of land, and that no one would see the signal, or would understand why the gun was fired. Then Tom proposed to build a raft, on which two boys could paddle after the runaway boat. This was a practicable suggestion, and it was at once put into execution.

It was hard work to cut down timber enough to build a raft, but by perseverance the raft was finished before noon. It consisted of four logs laid side by side, and bound together with handkerchiefs, shoe strings, green twigs, and

a few strips from one of Harry's shirts, which he said was unnecessarily long. It was covered with two or three pieces of flat drift-wood; and when it was finished a piece of board was found which was shaped with the hatchet into a rude paddle. Then Tom and Harry proceeded to embark.



HARRY SETS OUT IN PURSUIT OF THE BOAT.

The raft floated Harry very well, but promptly sank when Tom also stepped on it. Either more timber must be added to it, or one boy must go alone in search of the boat. Harry insisted upon going at once, and as the lake was perfectly smooth, and he could swim well, there did not

seem to be great risk in his making the voyage alone. Bidding the boys good-bye, he paddled slowly away, and left his comrades to anxiously wait for his return.

It was ticklish work paddling the raft. The logs were fastened together so insecurely, owing to the fact that all the rope was in the runaway boat, that Harry was in constant fear that they would come apart, and was obliged to paddle very carefully to avoid putting any strain on the raft. With such a craft speed was out of the question ; and after an hour of hard work the raft was only half way between the island and the boat. Harry was not easily discouraged, however, and he paddled on, knowing that if nothing happened he must reach the boat in course of time.

Something did happen. When, after paddling for more than two hours, the *Whitewing* was rather less than a quarter of a mile from the raft, Harry missed a stroke with his paddle, and tumbled over. He struck the raft with his shoulder, and went through it as easily as if it had been fastened together with paper. When he came to the surface again he found that the raft had separated into its original logs, and that his voyage on it was ended. Luckily the *Whitewing* was now within swimming distance, so he struck out for her, and finally crept into her over the stern, so much exhausted that he had to lie down and rest before taking to the oars. Had the raft gone to pieces half an hour sooner he would have been in a dangerous position ; for it is doubtful if he could have clung to one of the logs long enough to drift to the shore without becoming totally exhausted.

The boys on the island did not witness the end of Harry's raft, for it was too far away when the accident occurred for them to see anything but a little black dot on the water. They became, however, very anxious about him as the hours went by and he did not come back. Tom was especially uneasy, and blamed himself for permitting Harry to go alone. He thought of making another raft and going in search of Harry ; but there were no more strings with which to fasten logs together, and he did not quite like to tear up his clothes and use them for that purpose. He did, however, resolve that, if Harry did not come in sight within

another hour, he would take a small log and, putting it under his arms, try to swim to the mainland and borrow a boat, if one could be found, in which to search for his comrade. He was spared this hazardous experiment ; for toward the end of the afternoon Harry and the *Whitewing* came in sight, and were welcomed with a tremendous cheer.

Tom took the boat and went for provisions, and when he returned the *Whitewing* was not only dragged on shore, but fastened to two different trees with two distinct ropes. The boys were determined that she should not escape again ; and when Joe proposed that somebody should sit up with her all night, so that she could not cut the ropes and run away, Tom seriously considered the proposal. The next day a snug little dock was built, in which she seemed quite contented, and from which she could not escape without climbing over a stone breakwater—a feat of which there was no reason to believe that she was capable.





CHAPTER XIII.

THE boys had been on their island for more than a week when they resolved to make an excursion to Schroon, which was the nearest village, in order to get some sugar, coffee, and other necessities. Schroon Lake, or rather the lower end of it, was not more than five miles from Brandt Lake ; but there was a range of high hills between the two, and the village of Schroon was situated at the head of the lake, which was nearly ten miles in length. A long and tiresome journey was, therefore, before them, and they ought to have started early in the morning ; but they did not start until nearly eleven o'clock. Harry, Tom, and Joe were to go to Schroon together, and Jim was to stay at the island until six o'clock, when he was to row over to the west shore and bring the others back to the camp.

When they bade good-bye to Jim, the three other boys assured him that they would certainly be back as early as six o'clock, and warned him not to fail to meet them with the boat. They then started to cross the hills, following a footpath that was so little used that it was hardly visible. Unfortunately the path led through a thicket of raspberry bushes, and the fruit was so tempting that the boys lost a good deal of time by stopping to gather it. After a tiresome tramp under the mid-day sun they reached the lower end of Schroon Lake, where they hired a crank little row-boat, and rowed up to Schroon. There was a fresh northerly breeze which delayed them ; and the spray from

the bow of the boat sprinkled them, so that they were uncomfortably wet when they reached the village. By this time they were very hungry as well as tired, and so they went to the hotel for dinner. It was half-past six o'clock when they started to row down the lake, and several men who saw them warned them that they were running a good deal of risk in attempting to return at so late an hour.

The trip down the lake was certainly a rather foolhardy one; for there was a good deal of wind and sea, and long before they reached the landing-place it was quite dark. But the boys were anxious to get back to their camp, and for the first time during the cruise they acted somewhat recklessly. However, they met with no accident; and when they had returned the boat to its owner, they set out to cross the hills.

The path was not easy to find in the daylight, and it was next to impossible to find it in the night. A dozen times the boys lost themselves, and were compelled to depend entirely upon the stars to direct their course. The woods had been all cleared away for a space of a mile or a mile and a-half wide between the two lakes, except just along the shore of Brandt Lake; so that it was not absolutely necessary for them to keep in the path, as it would have been had they been passing through a thick forest. Still it was not pleasant to lose the path, and stumble over stones and stumps, and of course it made the journey longer. They must have walked at least seven or eight miles on their way back before they finally reached their own lake at midnight, at the point where they expected to find Jim waiting for them.

Neither Jim nor the boat was there. He had waited until ten o'clock, and then making up his mind that they had decided to spend the night at Schroon, he rowed back to the island, and went calmly to bed. An hour later a dense fog settled over the lake; and when the tired boys reached the shore they could see but a few yards in front of their eyes.

It was a terrible disappointment, but Harry tried to be cheerful. "We shall have to stay here to-night, boys," said he; "but we will build a good fire and keep warm." Tom

said that he thought that was the best thing to do, for without a fire they would suffer severely from the cold, wet fog, and he asked Harry if he had any matches. Harry had none, Joe had none, and Tom had none ; so the plan of building a fire came to nothing.



BIDDING JIM GOOD-BYE.

The cold gradually chilled them as they stood talking over their adventure, and their teeth began to chatter. Joe said he wished he could get hold of Jim for about five minutes, so that he could warm himself up by convincing him that he ought not to have taken the boat back to the island.

Harry said nothing ; but he was wondering whether he would freeze to death in the fog, and tried to remember how travellers overtaken by the snow on the Alps contrive to fight off the terrible drowsiness that steals over them when they are freezing. Tom was more practical. He did not expect to freeze in July, although he was miserably cold ; and he did not want to punish Jim for a mistake of judgment. He knew that the house where they were accustomed to get milk was not far off, and that a boat usually lay on the shore near the house ; so he proposed to Harry and Joe to borrow the boat and make their way into the camp.

"If we go to that house at this time of night, we shall get shot," remarked Harry. "The man is an ugly-tempered chap, and I heard him say the other day that if he ever heard anything prowling around the house at night, he always fired at it.

"Then we won't ask him for his boat ; we'll borrow it without leave, and Jim can bring it back in the morning," replied Tom.

"This is nice conduct for Moral Pirates," said Joe. "Capturing a vessel at night is real piracy, and when Jim takes the boat back the man will be sure to shoot him. I'm sorry for Jim ; but I hope it will be a warning to him not to leave his friends in such a fix that they've either got to borrow a boat without leave, or freeze."

They made their way stealthily and with great difficulty to the place where the boat lay. It was high and dry on the beach, and though the fog hid the house where the owner of the boat lived, the boys knew that it was very near. They launched the boat with the utmost caution, lest any noise should awaken the bad-tempered man with the shot-gun. They had it almost launched, when Harry's foot slipped on a wet stone, and he fell with a dismal crash, clinging to the boat, and dragging Tom and Joe down with him.

It was very certain that if anything could wake the owner of the boat, he must be awake by this time ; so the boys sprang up, and, shoving the boat into the water regardless of the noise, seized the oars, and rowed away into the

fog. When they had gained what they thought a safe distance from the shore, they ceased rowing, and congratulated themselves that they were all right at last. To be sure, Harry had scraped his ankle badly ; Tom had forgotten the coffee, and left it on the shore ; and Joe had put the sugar in the bottom of the leaky boat, where it was rapidly dissolving into syrup ; but they were once more afloat, and expected to reach their comfortable camp within the next twenty minutes.

There was not a particle of air stirring, and not a star was visible, so they had absolutely nothing to steer by. They could not even hear the sound of the water which ordinarily lapped the shore. Still they were not discouraged. Harry thought he knew which way the camp lay, and so he and Tom rowed in what they imagined was the right direction.

They rowed for two hours without finding the island, and without reaching the shore. They could not understand it. The lake seemed to have grown in the night, and to have reached the size of Lake Ontario. They knew that by daylight they could row across it at its widest part in less than an hour, but now it seemed impossible to find any shore. Joe had just suggested that they had made a mistake in coming back from Schroon, and had walked all the way to Lake Champlain, on which they were now rowing, when the bow of the boat struck the shore.

It was some consolation to know that the lake actually had a shore ; but they could not tell what part of the shore they had reached. They pushed off again, and resumed their hopeless search for the camp. A new trouble now harassed them. From seeming to have no shore at all, the lake now seemed to have shrunk to a mere mud-puddle. No matter in what direction they rowed, they would strike the shore within ten minutes, and always at a different place. Joe said that he had never dreamed that so much shore and so little lake could be put together.

Toward morning Harry and Tom became too tired to row, and they lay down in the bottom of the wet boat, and tried to keep warm by lying close to each other. Joe took the oars, and tried to row without hitting the shore ; but he

had hardly dipped his oars when the bow grated on the pebbles. He promptly gave up the attempt, and making the boat fast to a tree, joined Tom and Harry, and shared their misery.

They were much too cold and wretched to sleep, but they managed to keep from growing positively stiff with cold. The sun rose, but it did not for a long time make any impression on the fog. All at once, about seven o'clock, the fog vanished; and the boys found themselves in a little bay near the extreme northerly part of the lake. They had been rowing across this little bay, first in one direction and then in another, during all those miserable hours when they found such an unaccountable quantity of shore.

Of course they rowed down to the camp, where they found Jim still sleeping soundly, with a contented, happy look that was awfully exasperating. They woke him up, and scolded him with all the strength they had left, and then, putting on dry clothes, "turned in," and slept all day. Jim towed the borrowed boat back, but was not shot; and the boys afterward said that, on the whole, they were rather glad that he still lived, and that they would mercifully forgive him.





CHAPTER XIV.

THERE was only one fault to be found with Brandt Lake ; there was hardly anything to shoot in its vicinity. Occasionally a deer could be found ; but at the season of the year when the boys were at the lake it was contrary to law to kill deer. It was known that there were bears in that part of the country as well as lynxes—or catamounts, as they are generally called ; but they were so scarce that no one thought of hunting them. Harry did succeed in shooting three pigeons and a quail, and Tom shot a grey squirrel ; but the bears, deer, catamounts, and ducks that they had expected to shoot did not show themselves.

On the other hand, they had any quantity of fishing. Perch and cat-fish swarmed all around the island ; and large pickerel, some of them weighing six or eight pounds, could be caught by trolling. Two miles farther north was another lake that was full of trout, and the boys visited it several times, and found out how delicious a trout is when it is cooked within half an hour after it is taken out of the water. In fact, they lived principally upon fish, and became so dainty that they would not condescend to cook any but the choicest trout, and the plumpest cat-fish and pickerel.

It must be confessed that there was a good deal of monotony in their daily life. In the morning somebody went for milk, after which breakfast was cooked and eaten. Then one of the boys would take the gun and tramp through the woods in the hope of finding something to

shoot, while the others would either go fishing or lie in the shade. Once they devoted a whole day to circumnavigating the lake in the boat, and another day a long rain-storm kept them inside of the tent most of the time. With these exceptions one day was remarkably like another ; and at the end of two weeks they began to grow a little tired of camping, and to remember that there were ways of enjoying themselves at home.

Their final departure from their island camp was caused by an accident. They had decided to row to the southern end of the lake and engage a team to meet them the following week and carry them to Glenn's Falls, where they intended to ship the boat on board a canal-boat bound for New York, and to return home by rail. To avoid the heat of the sun, they started down the lake immediately after breakfast, and forgot to put out the fire before they left the island.

After they had rowed at least a mile, Tom, who sat facing the stern, noticed a light wreath of smoke rising from the island, and remarked, "Our fire is burning yet. We ought not to have gone off and left it."

Harry looked back, and saw that the cloud of smoke was rapidly increasing.

"It's not the fire that's making all that smoke !" he exclaimed.

"What is it, then ?" asked Tom.

"Perhaps it's water," said Joe. "I always thought that where there was smoke there must be fire ; but Harry says it isn't fire."

"I mean," continued Harry, "that we didn't leave fire enough to make so much smoke. It must have spread and caught something."

"Caught the tent, most likely," said Tom. "Let's row back right away and put it out."

"What's the use ?" interrupted Jim. "That tent is as dry as tinder, and will burn up before we can get half-way there."

"We must get back as soon as we can," cried Harry. "All our things are in the tent. Row your best, boys, and we may save them yet."

The boat was quickly turned, and headed toward the camp. The fire was rapidly increasing, and it was apparent that the dry underbush must have caught; in which case the fire would soon fasten on the trees, and sweep over the whole of the little island.



THE EXPLOSION IN CAMP.

"There's one reason why I'm not particularly anxious to help put that fire out," Joe remarked, as they approached the island, and could see that a really alarming fire was in progress.

"What's that?" asked Harry.

"As near as I can calculate, there must be about two pounds ——"

He was interrupted by a loud report from the island, and a shower of pebbles, sticks, and small articles—among which a shoe and a tin pail were recognised—shot into the air.

—"Of powder," Joe continued, "in the flask. I thought it would blow up, and now that it's all gone I don't mind landing on the island."

"Everything must be ruined!" exclaimed Jim.

"Lucky for us that we put on our shoes this morning," Tom remarked, as he rowed steadily on. "That must have been one of my other pair that just went up. I remember I put them in the corner of the tent close by the powder."

When they reached the island they could not at first land, on account of the heat of the flames; but they could plainly see that the tent and everything in it had been totally destroyed. After waiting for half-an-hour the fire burnt itself out, so that they could approach their dock and land on the smoking ash heap that an hour before had been such a beautiful, shady spot. There was hardly anything left that was of any use. A tin pan, a fork, and the hatchet were found uninjured; but all their clothing and other stores were either burnt to ashes or so badly scorched as to be useless. Quite overwhelmed by their disaster, the boys sat down and looked at one another.

"We've got to go home now, whether we want to or not," Harry said, as he poked the ashes idly with a stick.

"Well, we meant to go home in a few days anyway," said Tom; "so the fire hasn't got very much the better of us."

"But I hate to have everything spoiled, and to have to go in this sort of way. Our tin pans and fishing-tackle aren't worth much, but all our spare clothes have gone."

"You've got your uncle's gun in the boat, so that's all right," suggested Tom, encouragingly. "As long as the gun and the boat are safe, we needn't mind about a few flannel shirts and things."

"But it's such a pity to be driven away when we were having such a lovely time," continued Harry.

"That's rubbish, Harry," said Joe. "We were all beginning to get tired of camping out. I think it's jolly to have the cruise end this way, with a lot of fireworks. It's like the transformation scene at the theatre. Besides, it saves us the trouble of carrying a whole lot of things back with us."

"The thing to do now," remarked Tom, "is to row right down to the outlet, and get a team to take us to Glenn's Falls this afternoon. We can't sleep here, unless we build a hut, and then we wouldn't have a blanket to cover us. Don't let's waste any more time talking about it."

"That's so! Take your places in the boat, boys, and we'll start for home." So saying, Harry led the way to the boat, and in a few moments the *Whitewing* was homeward bound.

The boys were lucky enough to find a man who engaged to take them to Glenn's Falls in time to catch the afternoon train for Albany. They stopped at the Falls only long enough to see the *Whitewing* safely on board a canal-boat, and they reached Albany in time to go down the river on the night-boat.

After a supper that filled the coloured waiters with astonishment and horror, the boys selected arm-chairs on the forward deck, and began to talk over the cruise. They all agreed that they had had a splendid time, in spite of hard work and frequent wettings.

"We'll go on another cruise next summer, sure," said Harry. "Where shall we go?"

Tom was the first to reply. Said he, "I've been thinking that we can do better than we did this time."

"How so?" asked the other boys.

"The *Whitewing* is an awfully nice boat," Tom continued, "but she is too small. We ought to have a boat that we can sleep in comfortably, and without getting wet every night."

"But, then," Harry suggested, "you couldn't drag a bigger boat round a dam."

"We can't drag the *Whitewing* round much of a dam. She's too big to be handled on land, and too little to be comfortable. Now, here's my plan."

"Let's have it," cried the other boys.

"We can hire a cat-boat about twenty feet long, and she'll be big enough, so that we can rig up a canvas cabin at night. We can anchor her, and sleep on board her every night. We can carry mattresses, so we needn't sleep on stones and stumps—"

—"And coffee-pots," interrupted Joe.

—"And we can take lots of things, and live comfortably. We can sail instead of rowing; and though I like to row as well as the next fellow, we've had a little too much of that. Now, we'll get a cat-boat next summer, and we'll cruise from New York Bay to Montauk Point. We can go all the way through the bays on the south side, and there are only three places where we will have to get a team of horses to drag the boat across a little bit of flat meadow. I know all about it, for I studied it out on the map one day. What do you say to that for a cruise?"

"I'll go," said Harry.

"And I'll go," said Jim.

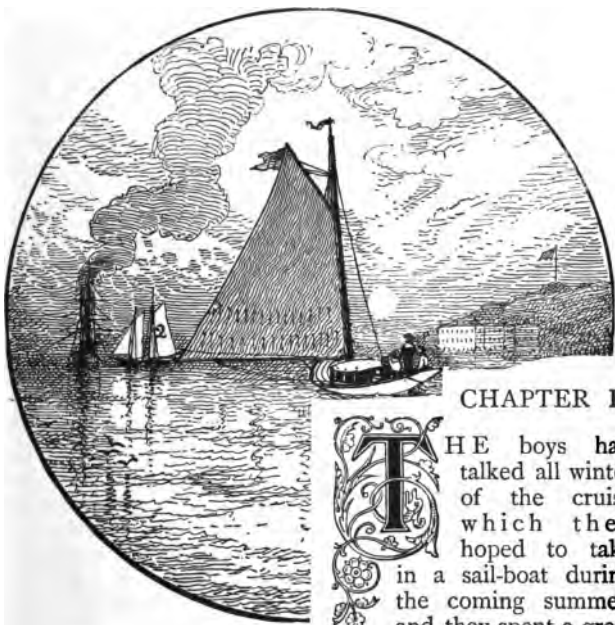
"Hurrah for the cat-boat!" said Joe. "We can be twice as moral and piratical in a sail-boat as we can in a row-boat, even if it is the dear little *Whitewing*."



THE CRUISE OF THE "GHOST."



THE
CRUISE OF THE "GHOST."



CHAPTER I.

THE boys had talked all winter of the cruise which they hoped to take in a sail-boat during the coming summer, and they spent a great many Saturday afternoons at boat-yards and places where sail-boats are laid up for the winter. They found several cat-boats that suited them very well, and that could be bought at a low price ; but they did not so easily convince

Uncle John that a sail-boat cruise would be a safe enterprise for boys so young as Tom Schuyler, Jim and Joe Sharpe, and Harry Wilson. They did not say much about it to Mr. Schuyler, Mr. Sharpe, or Harry's father, for, as Joe pointed out, when Uncle John Wilson gave his consent, it would be time enough to speak to them.

"If I go now," he said, "and ask father if I can go cruising in a cat-boat, he'll say, 'Most certainly not, my son; boys have no business with sail-boats.' But if Uncle John goes to him, and tells him all about it, he'll be perfectly satisfied, and say, 'My son, I think you had better do as Mr. Wilson suggests.'"

Joe was quite right, for Mr. Sharpe, while he knew nothing about boats, had entire confidence in Mr. John Wilson's prudence and judgment; and though he would have been very apt to refuse to give his sons permission to go sailing—on any ordinary occasion—he would have consented to any plan proposed by so careful and trustworthy a man as Uncle John was known to be.

When the sail-boat cruise was first proposed to Uncle John, he was not inclined to think well of it.

"You've been Moral Pirates in a row-boat," said he, "and now you want to try Moral Piracy in a sail-boat. To tell you the truth, boys, I don't half like the idea. To manage a sail-boat requires more coolness and judgment than boys generally have, so I don't think the Department will be able to put a sail-boat in commission this year."

It was not until Uncle John found that the water in the bays on the south side of Long Island, where Tom Schuyler wanted to cruise, was in nearly all places too shallow for drowning purposes, that he consented to say that he would "think about" the sail-boat plan. He thought about it for some time without seeing any good reason to approve of it. He told Tom that while it was true that the water in the bay was deep only in certain narrow steamboat channels, a sail-boat might capsize in one of these very channels. Besides, if one of the boys were to fall overboard, the sail-boat could not pick him up as quickly as he could be picked up were he to fall out of a row-boat.

"After all," he added, "the real difficulty is that not one of you is accustomed to manage a sail-boat, and that is a difficulty which we can't get over."

The boys still continued to talk among themselves about their desired cruise, without giving up the hope that Uncle John would change his mind, and when spring came something happened that did make him change it. Tom received a letter from his friend Charley Smith, who was in the Naval Academy at Annapolis, saying that he would come and spend the months of July and August with him. Now Charlie was a very fine fellow, nearly a year older than Tom. He had been two years at the Academy, and was already a good sailor. Tom immediately wrote to him and asked him how he would like to be captain of a sail-boat, and go on a cruise through the south bays. Charley was delighted with the plan, and wrote to his guardian—for he had no father nor mother—and easily obtained his consent.

Now Uncle John knew Charley Smith well, and thought very highly of him, and when Tom came to him and showed him Charlie's letter, he said at once that the Department of Moral Piracy would be glad to put Captain Charles Smith in command of a cat-boat.

"My dear boy," he continued, "I disliked to say No when you proposed your plan, and I am as pleased as you are now that I can conscientiously approve of it. Charley is perfectly competent to manage a sail-boat, and if he will take charge of the boat, and you and the other boys will obey his orders, you shall have your cruise if I can bring it about."

And he did bring it about, as Joe said he would. Mr. Sharpe, Mr. Schuyler, and Harry's father all gave their consent when Uncle John explained the matter to them; and when this important matter was settled, Uncle John went with the boys to select a boat.

They found one at Gowanus which they all agreed was just the boat they wanted. She was twenty feet long, with plenty of beam, and with room under her forward deck to carry a good deal of cargo. She was only two or three years old, and was perfectly sound and very strong. There was a good copper pump fastened to the after-end of the

centre-board trunk, and all she seemed to need to fit her for immediate use was a good coat of paint. The boatman from whom she was bought was ordered to deliver her at Harlem, and the boys went home delighted.

For the next few weeks the boys went to look at the boat at least twice a week, and devoted most of their spare time in drawing up lists of things to be taken with them on the cruise, and to studying the Coast Survey charts of the south shore of Long Island. Tom contrived a plan for making a cabin to be used at night. He had small iron sockets placed at each end of the cockpit so as to hold two upright sticks. Across these an oar was laid for a ridge-pole, and over the ridge-pole was stretched a piece of canvas, the sides of which were tied to rings fastened on the outside of the washboard. In this way the cockpit was entirely covered, and in the cabin thus formed the boys could lie or sit on the bottom of the boat and keep perfectly dry in the heaviest shower. Of course this cabin, or tent, could be used only when the sail was furled, and the boom hoisted a foot, so as to be out of the way, but it was not intended to use it except at night, when the boat would be at anchor or moored to the shore.

The various lists of stores drawn up by the boys showed that their cruise in the *Whitewing* had taught them what things were necessary and what things were unnecessary for a long boating expedition. Uncle John had cushions made for the seats, not, as he told the boys, because they needed cushions to sit on, but because these cushions could be laid on the bottom of the boat at night and used as mattresses. This particularly pleased Joe Sharpe, who had put down on his list, "Thirty pounds of tenpenny nails for a bed." He said, in explanation of this: "I'm tired of sleeping on coffee-pots and tin cups, as I used to when we slept in the *Whitewing*, and I thought some good big nails would be a good deal more comfortable. However, if Uncle John supplies mattresses, I'll cross off the nails, for I don't think they would be quite as comfortable as a mattress."

As on their former cruise, the boys decided to wear only blue flannel shirts and trousers, and to take neither coats nor waistcoats. Of course, each one had a change of clothes,

besides a blanket and a rubber blanket, but Harry's proposal that they should take rubber overcoats with them was voted down. When Uncle John came to look over their lists, he



"I DON'T LIKE HER AT ALL."

found scarcely a single article which could be spared, with the exception of Tom's cannon. This was an iron cannon about a foot long, and with an inch bore, and the boys were

so anxious to take it with them that Uncle John consented, telling them that it might prove useful in the way of ballast should any of their sand-bags be lost overboard.

It was decided not to paint the boat or to name her until Charley Smith should see her. On the first of July he arrived in town, and was met by the boys, who instantly carried him to Harlem to show him the boat. They expected that he would be delighted with her; but what was their dismay, when, after looking at her for a few minutes in silence, he answered Tom's question, "How do you like her?" by saying, gravely, "I don't like her at all."

"Why, what in the world is the matter with her?" demanded Tom, while the others looked wonderingly at the young sailor who did not like their beautiful boat.

"Nothing that can't be cured," answered Charley. "The trouble with her is that she's a cat-boat, and a cat-boat is just the meanest kind of boat in the world."

"Can't we turn her into a dog-boat, or a horse-boat?" asked Joe. "To tell the truth, boys, I don't believe a cat-boat can be good for much if she's anything like a cat. I wonder if cat-boats can climb back fences and howl?"

"I always thought that a cat-boat was the best kind of sail boat anybody could have," said Tom. "There's only one sail and three ropes to handle."

"There are two reasons why a cat-boat isn't fit for a cruise where you are liable to meet all kinds of weather," replied Charley. "One is that you can't run before a gale with her. You've no sail except the mainsail, and even if you close reef it and drop the peak, you will sometimes have more sail than the boat ought to carry. Then, when you're scudding, the boom is apt to roll under, and if this happens when it is blowing hard, and there's a good deal of sea on, you'll capsize so quick that you won't have time to put on your overshoes."

"But what good would overshoes do you in deep water?" asked Tom.

Charley smiled, but did not answer him.

"The other reason why I don't like the cat-boat is that she won't work to windward with her peak dropped. If you are sailing in a wind, no matter how hard it blows, you

must keep the peak up, or you can't keep the boat from falling off. I don't care how many rows of reef-points the sail-maker may have put on the sail, you can't reduce it to more than half its original size if you expect the boat to beat to windward. If a cat-boat is caught in a heavy gale, blowing directly off shore, she can't carry sail enough to work into the lee of the land, and she is liable to be blown a hundred miles out to sea."

"What kind of a boat ought we to have, then?" inquired Tom, who did not understand everything that Charley said, but who knew that he must be right.

"A jib-and-mainsail boat, of course," replied Charley. "If you have to scud, you can scud all day under your jib, and keep as dry as a bone, and you can work her to windward with the mainsail close reefed. If you have your jib sheets led aft, the boat can be handled by one man just as easy as a cat-boat. The only time a cat-boat is good for sailing is in a dead calm on a mud-bank."

"But how can you sail if there's a dead calm?" asked Tom.

"What we ought to do with that boat," Charley continued, "is to step her mast about eighteen inches aft of where it is stepped now. Then we can rig out a bowsprit and put a jib on her. She ought to be lengthened at the stern too, so that we could reach the end of the boom and put in a reef without going ashore to do it."

"We might make the bowsprit ourselves," said Tom; "but we couldn't lengthen her ourselves, and it would cost a good deal to get it done."

"I'll undertake to lengthen her myself," said Charley. "It won't cost us anything but the price of a few nails and some pieces of wood."

"How would you go to work?" cried Jim. "Do you mean to saw her in two, put a piece in, and nail her together again?"

"Perhaps," said Joe, "he means to steam her, and then stretch her. If you can bend wood by steaming it, you ought to be able to stretch it."

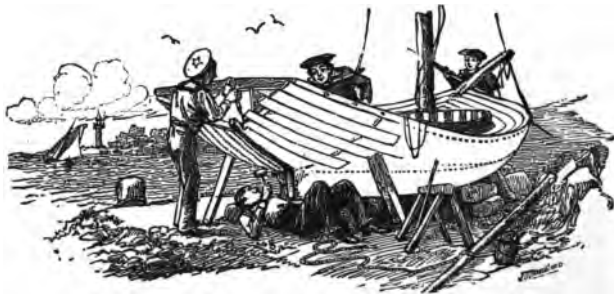
"I'll show you what I mean if you fellows will only pay attention," replied Charley. "Now, here's her transom,

this flat board at her stern, where her name ought to be painted. You see it's all above water, and that the end of every plank is nailed to it. Now the first thing to do is to take four pieces of joist—I believe that's what carpenters call it—about four inches square, and bolt them to the transom. You want to put them about six inches apart, and they must be just as long as the transom is deep."

"I don't quite understand," said Tom, "what you mean by saying they must be as long as the transom is deep."

"I mean that each piece that you bolt on must reach from the level of the deck, that is, from the top of the transom, to the lower edge of the transom."

"Oh, now I understand," exclaimed Tom.



BUILDING THE "OVERHANG."

"Very well. Now you want to take four pieces of inch plank, two feet eleven inches long, and fasten them with screw-bolts to the side of each piece of joist, so that they will extend in a straight line from the stern. To the ends of these planks you must nail a new transom, which will have to be smaller in every way than the old one, because the lines of the boat, when carried out three feet, will approach each other. After you have put braces between the pieces of plank, so as to keep them firm, you must carry out your planking and your deck to the new transom, and there you have your boat lengthened three feet. The lengthened part will be all 'overhang,' but the boat will be all the prettier for it."

"Won't she be very weak?" asked Tom.

"Not if you do the work carefully. The new planking mustn't all begin at the old transom, or she wouldn't hold together; but if you cut every other one of the old planks off at the first timber (rib, I suppose you'd call it) forward of the transom, and fasten the end of the new plank to this timber, and follow the same plan in carrying out the deck planks, she'll be strong enough. We'll leave a hole in the deck for the rudder head to come through, and will have to move the iron rod that the sheet-block travels on a couple of feet further aft. I'd like no better fun than to lengthen her, if you fellows would like to have me do it, and we can get the tools."

The boys were greatly pleased with Charley's proposal. The boat, when lengthened and sloop-rigged, would, they thought, be a real yacht, and altogether a much more imposing craft than a cat-boat. The matter was laid before Uncle John that night, and he willingly agreed to pay the cost of carrying out Charley's plans. "He is right," said Uncle John, "about the rig, and I suppose he is right about lengthening the boat. He shall have whatever he needs; but I hope you'll all remember that if the Department spends all its money in fitting out this boat, you'll have to turn round and keep the Department in food and clothes for the rest of its days."





CHAPTER II.

THE next day Charley had the boat drawn up on the shore, and went to work at her, assisted by the other boys. It took two weeks of constant work to lengthen her, but when she was finished, everybody admitted that she was greatly improved.

The jib halyards and sheets, as well as the throat and peak halyards, were all led aft so that they could be reached by the helmsman without leaving his post. When all the other work was finished, Charley made a gun-carriage for the cannon, and it was lashed to the deck just forward of the mast. Nothing now remained to be done but to name the boat, and this proved to be the most difficult task of all. Each of the boys could think of a dozen names that he did not like, but not one that he really did like. Tom thought that perhaps they could not do better than to call her the *America*, or the *George Washington*, but admitted that both of those names were in rather too common use. Harry said that he didn't much like the idea of calling her the *Red Revenger*, but if they couldn't find any better name they might have to come to it. Charley ridiculed the idea of calling her the *Red Revenger*, since she was not intended to revenge anything, and instead of being red was white as a ghost. "Then suppose we call her the *Ghost*!" exclaimed Joe.

The other boys asked if he was in earnest, said that it would never do to call the boat the *Ghost*, and finally agreed

that they rather liked the name than otherwise, on account of its oddity. The end of it was that Joe's suggestion was adopted, and *Ghost* was painted in large letters on the stern.

Three days before the cruise was to begin Jim Sharpe fell down an open cellarway and broke his leg. The boys at first thought of abandoning their cruise altogether, but Jim wouldn't hear of it. He told them to go and write him letters every few days, and convinced them that he would really feel hurt if they did not go, so they bade him good-bye, and set sail from Harlem the following Monday morning, half in doubt whether they ought to enjoy themselves while poor Jim was lying on a sick bed, where he was to pass most of his vacation.

The breeze blew gently from the west, and the *Ghost*, with the tide in her favour, slipped rapidly down the river under full sail. As soon as the yacht was fairly off, Charley, who was at the helm, divided his crew into watches. The starboard watch consisted of the captain and Joe, and the port watch consisted of Tom and Harry, the former being in command of it as mate. Each watch was to take charge of the boat in turn, and to remain in charge four hours, except when the *Ghost* might be lying at anchor. The officer in charge of the watch was to steer, while his companion was to be stationed in the forward part of the cockpit, where he could handle the centre-board and attend to the jib-sheets. Whenever the officer gave an order, it was to be executed by his companion, and the other boys were to remain quiet unless "all hands" were called. Charley had been in the navy long enough to know that no vessel, however small, or however big she may be, can be properly sailed unless every member of the crew knows what his duty is, and how to do it, and refrains from interfering with the duty of other men, unless especially ordered to do so.

The river was crowded with sailing craft and steamboats, and it was no easy matter to steer the *Ghost* so as to avoid collision. Every little while a ferry-boat or tug would whistle hoarsely, and the boys noticed that very often Charley altered the course he had been steering as soon as he heard the whistle. "Do those whistles mean anything

except for us to get out of the way?" asked Harry, presently.

"A long whistle or a lot of little short whistles means 'get out of the road,'" answered Charley; "but when you hear a steamboat give one short whistle, or two short whistles, she is telling you which way she is going to steer. Now there's a tug coming up the river, straight at us; you'll hear her whistle in a few minutes, and then I'll know what she's going to do, and which way to steer to keep out of her way." He had hardly said this when the tug gave two blasts of the whistle. "That means she's going to starboard her helm and pass on our right," exclaimed Charley, at the same moment heading the *Ghost* a little more toward the Brooklyn shore.

"I thought," said Harry, as the steamboat passed between the *Ghost* and the New York shore, "that 'starboard' meant right, and 'port' left."

"So it does."

"Then how did that tug turn to the left when you said she was going to starboard her helm?"

"If I push the tiller over to the left-hand side of the boat, I port my helm; but the boat turns to the right, doesn't she? Well, the tiller is really the helm, and every vessel, whether she is steered with a wheel or not, has a tiller, though it may not be in sight. Now, when the helm is pushed or pulled toward the port side, the vessel turns her head to starboard, and when it's pushed towards the starboard side she turns her head to port. You've got to remember this, for some day if one of you is steering, and I sing out 'port,' you mustn't make any mistake about it."

"I understand," said Joe. "The boat is always to do the opposite of what you tell me to do if I'm steering. When you tell me to 'port,' the boat will turn to the starboard, and when you tell me to 'starboard,' she'll turn to port. It's very scientific, but it is what I call dreadfully contrary."

"The easiest rule for understanding a steamer whistle is this," continued Charley. "If she blows one whistle, she means to pass on the port side of you; and if she blows

two, she means to pass on your starboard side. Now there are two syllables in starboard, and one in port, and if you imagine that the two whistles spell 'starboard,' and the one whistle spells 'port,' you won't ever make any mistake."

After this explanation the boys amused themselves listening to the steam-whistles, and translating them into "starboard" and "port." They soon saw that the steamers, which could tell what they wanted to do, were not half so troublesome as the sailing vessels, and that Charley watched the latter with much greater care than he did the former.

"There ought to be steam-whistles or something of the kind on those schooners," said Harry, presently. "I suppose they do just as they please about running people down."

"Oh no," replied Charley. "There's a set of rules for them too. The captain of that big fellow over there knows that he has the right of way over the schooner with the torn mainsail, and that he must keep out of the way of the one with the three masts, close over there by the shore. It all depends on the course each one is steering; but I'm too busy to explain it just now. If they obeyed the rules, it would be all right, but the trouble is they don't consider that a small sail-boat has any rights, and if we don't want to get run down, we've got to look out for ourselves, and keep out of the way. The steamboats would be just as bad, only when a steamboat runs anybody down, somebody is sure to say something about it, and get the captain into a scrape; so they have to be more careful."

The boys were glad when they passed out of the East River, and by way of Buttermilk Channel reached the bay, where, by skirting the Long Island shore, they were out of the track of steamers and other craft. They had a delightful sail through the Narrows and down the broad outer bay, where there was a long gentle swell that gave the boat a just perceptible roll. About four o'clock they reached the mouth of the little creek which separates Coney Island from Long Island, and found it so narrow and shallow that they began to think it was not navigable for anything larger than a row-boat. Charley allowed the boat to run her bow gently against the shore, and told Joe to keep her from drifting off

while he climbed up the mast hoops to see how the land and water lay.

He came down in a moment or two, and ordering Joe to push off, steered up the creek. "The tide's out, boys," he explained, "and we can't get through till it comes in again. We'll just run up to a bridge that's close by, and get the mast down, so that we can be ready to pass under it tomorrow morning."

They reached the bridge in a few moments; the sails were lowered, and the *Ghost* made fast to the timbers of the bridge; and then they began to wonder how in the world they were going to be able to get the mast out. They all stood on the bridge and tried to lift the mast, but



it was so heavy that they could not stir it. Had the bridge been a few feet higher, they could have taken the throat-halyard blocks and rigged a tackle with which to hoist the mast out, but the bridge was so low

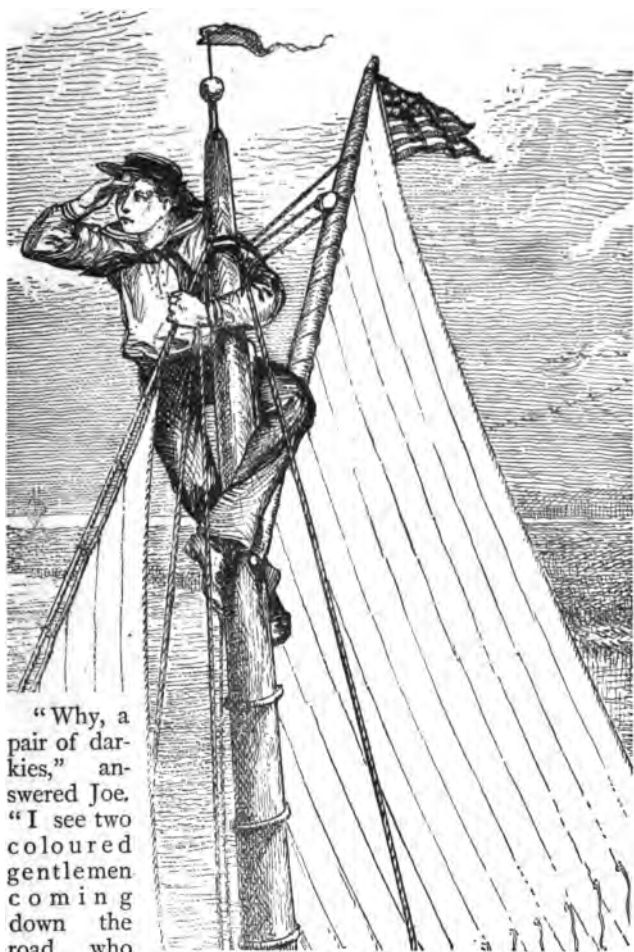
that this could not be done. After they had tried their best to lift the heavy mast, Charley told them it was of no use, and that they must have a pair of shears.

"I've got a small pair of scissors," said Tom, "but I don't see how they will help you at all."

"A pair of shears," replied Charley, "is two timbers with the upper ends fastened together so that they look like a letter A. If we had a pair of shears ten feet high, we could stand it on this bridge, lash a tackle to it, and hoist that mast right out. That's the way to hoist a lower mast out of a ship."

"I can tell you what's better than a pair of shears, though it mayn't be quite so stylish," said Joe.

"What's that?"



"Why, a pair of dar-kies," answered Joe. "I see two coloured gentlemen coming down the road who can lift as

AT THE MAST HEAD.

much as any shears, and we'd better get them to help us."

The coloured men were strong and amiable, and they

lifted out the mast with perfect ease, and refused any payment. Laying the mast along the deck, the boys went on board the *Ghost*, and getting out the oars, rowed her a little way up the creek, and made her fast for the night by carrying the anchor ashore and planting it in a field.

"Now, boys, we'll have supper," exclaimed Charley.

"Who's going to cook?" asked Tom. "On the last cruise we took turns cooking, just as we did about going for the milk and getting firewood."

"By the bye, I don't see any firewood around here," said Joe, "and I don't see any chance of getting any milk."

"If the captain's willing, I'll do the cooking to-night, and get my own fire-wood," said Harry. "We've got some condensed milk, and we can get along well enough with that."

"When anybody volunteers to do a really noble act, he ought to be allowed to do it," said the captain. "Harry shall get the supper to-night, but after this we'll take our regular turns. I'll read the list of assignments every morning, and to-morrow morning I'll get the breakfast myself."

While this conversation was in progress, Harry was down on his knees hunting for something under the forward deck. Presently he dragged out a package wrapped in brown paper, and about the size of a small butter tub. Then he made a second search, and brought out two bottles, the coffee-pot, and the cups, plates, and other dishes.

The boys watched him with much interest while he unwrapped the mysterious bundle. It proved to be a small kerosene stove. Standing it on the deck out of the way of the boom, Harry filled it with oil from one of the bottles, and lighted the wick. When it was burning nicely, the coffee-pot, full of water, was placed on the stove, where it boiled in a very few minutes. Then, putting the coffee-pot aside, so that the grounds might have time to settle, Harry put a little frying-pan on the stove, laid half-a-dozen sausages in it, and told the boys to pour out their coffee, for the sausages would be ready for them by the time the last cup of coffee would be ready. He was as good as his word, and the sausages were cooked better—so everybody agreed—than sausages had ever been cooked before.

"Where in the world did you get that stove from?" Tom demanded, as his last bit of sausage disappeared.

"It is a present to us," replied Harry. "Jim's mother sent it to me this morning, but she showed me how to use it two or three days ago. She sent it because poor old Jim couldn't go."

"Poor Jim!" exclaimed Charley. "It's a shame he isn't here. We'll write to him to-morrow, and tell him how splendidly the stove works. Why, it will save us all the trouble of getting firewood for the whole cruise."

After the supper was over, the canvas covering was rigged over the cockpit, the beds were made, and the boys prepared to sleep.

"This cushion is a great deal softer than the coffee-pot and the tin cans were last summer," remarked Joe; "but then we used to wake up early, and now we're so comfortable that we'll probably sleep all the morning. I don't expect to wake up till ten o'clock."

"You'll wake up in exactly two hours," said Charley, "and stand your anchor watch. I don't believe in leaving the boat to take care of herself all night so near to a road as we are. I'll stand the first watch from eight to ten, and when your two hours are up, you will call Harry, who will call Tom at two o'clock, and we'll all turn out at four. So go to sleep, you fellows, and I'll just put my water-proof round my shoulders, and sit on deck."

Charley was firmly determined to keep awake until ten o'clock, but it was very dull work sitting still for two hours. Besides, there was a very heavy dew, and the young captain soon found himself growing cold. He thought he would lie down on deck, and draw the waterproof blanket over his head, so as to keep himself warm. He did so, and in a few moments was sound asleep. He woke up about dawn, feeling very cold and stiff, and, creeping into the cabin, took a second nap until nearly seven o'clock.

"What do you do in the navy with a man who goes to sleep when he is on duty?" asked Harry, as the crew sat down to breakfast.

"We try him by court-martial, and punish him," answered Charley.

"Then I'd like to know how soon you'll be ready to be tried for going to sleep last night while you were on watch?"

"You did sleep, you know, for I woke up twice in the night and spoke to you, but you were regularly snoring," said Tom.

"We're very sorry about it," added Joe, "but I can't see how such a crime can be overlooked. It's a dreadful example for a captain to set, and if it isn't punished there won't be any discipline at all on this vessel."

"You're forgetting one thing, boys," said Charley. "A captain isn't required to stand an anchor watch, and has the right to sleep all night if he wants to. I can't be punished for going to sleep, but all three of you can. You have no excuse for not coming on deck when it came your turn, and I ought to punish every one of you, but I shall pardon you this time. Only mind you don't let it happen again. Now, if you have got through breakfast, the port watch will clear up the deck and then go below, and the starboard watch will weigh anchor and get out the oars."





CHAPTER III.

THE port watch did as they were ordered ; that is, after having put everything in order, they stretched themselves lazily on the seats, and let Charley and Joe manage the boat. The tide was running up the creek, and Joe using one oar as a pole, rapidly poled the boat on her way. The creek wound in and out the meadow, and the boat constantly ran aground, so that it was by no means easy work either to find the channel or to keep in it. Half a dozen bridges were passed, under one of which the passage between the piles was so narrow that had it been two inches narrower the *Ghost* would have found her way effectually stopped. Charley and Joe frequently changed places, one steering while the other poled, and thus managed to work the boat through the creek without getting too tired. Poling a boat where the bottom is muddy is no joke, as Joe found after he had fallen overboard twice. There was no trouble in putting the oar on the bottom, or in pushing the boat along, but when he tried to pull the oar out again it would sometimes stick firmly in the mud and try its best to pull him overboard. Harry and Tom did not lift a finger to help Joe out of the water when he fell into it, because, as they said, it was their duty not to interfere unless the captain should call all hands. The water was not over two feet deep, so that Joe was not in any danger, but he was not very well pleased at the way in which Harry and Tom laughed, and he announced that if the port watch intended to laugh every

time the starboard watch fell overboard, he should consider it the duty of the latter to drip all over the former.

The creek now broadened into what is called Sheepshead Bay, which is merely an arm of Jamaica Bay, and Charley ran the boat into a small dock, where half-a-dozen men cheerfully helped the boys to step the mast. The main-sail and jib were hoisted and trimmed, and the *Ghost* began to thread the channel between the islands that are so plentiful in Jamaica Bay. It was nearly eleven o'clock, and for the last hour a steady sea breeze had been blowing, that carried the boat along at the rate of six miles an hour. Joe changed his clothes, ate a biscuit, and enjoyed the relief from the hard labour of poling. Presently Charley called him to take the helm while he studied the chart, in order to find the way to the place where they meant to drag the boat across to Hempstead Bay. The chart was of great use in helping him to find the way among the islands in the western part of the bay; but when the *Ghost* finally reached the broad open water, it was no longer needed, for the houses of Far Rockaway came into sight, and served as landmarks. At twelve o'clock the port watch took charge of the deck, and an hour later the bow of the boat was run ashore at the eastern extremity of the bay, the sails were furled, and lunch was made ready.

The boys had intended to drag the boat over the sandy strip of land between Jamaica Bay and the entrance to Hempstead Bay. They had all said that as the distance between the two bays was only a few rods, it would be easy to get the boat across; but as yet nobody had suggested how it was to be done. When they came to look the matter in the face, they found that what they had proposed to do was quite impossible. The boat would have to be dragged at least twenty rods through deep sand, and not even a team of horses could have performed the feat.

"It's no use talking about it," said Tom; "it can't be done. If the *Ghost* isn't sailed into Hempstead Bay she will never get there."

"Then she shall sail!" exclaimed Charley.

"Have we got to go all the way back to New York Bay and sail outside of Coney Island?" asked Harry.

"The *Ghost* is a good boat, but I don't want to go to sea in her."

"We needn't go back to New York Bay. Look at this chart. Here you see Rockaway Inlet. The steamboats come through it into Jamaica Bay. Now from Jamaica Inlet to the entrance to Hempstead Bay, which isn't a regular inlet, but just a channel between Rockaway Beach and the bar outside of it that is all above water at low tide, isn't more than three or four miles. We'll sail back to the inlet, run out of it, and run into Hempstead Bay without a bit of trouble. There's a good steady breeze, and the sea is almost as quiet as the bay. There won't be the least danger in doing it."

"All right," said Harry. "We'll start right away, and get into the other bay as soon as possible. It looks easy enough, but we must be sure to do it before dark."

They all went on board, and the sails were again set. The wind was nearly ahead all the way to the inlet, and the *Ghost* made slow progress. They were nearly opposite the last of the Rockaway Beach hotels, when Joe said, "I must have a drink of water."

This was a very simple remark, but it recalled to everybody the recollection of the fact that there was not a drop of water on board the boat. The boys had drunk coffee at their breakfast and at supper the night before, and it had so happened that nobody had wanted a drink of water until Joe mentioned the subject. Not only did they instantly discover that they were terribly thirsty, but they were ashamed to find that they had started on a cruise on the Atlantic—for after passing through the inlet they would really be on the broad ocean—without a drop of water.

"You made the coffee," said Charley to Harry. "Where did you get your fresh water from?"

"Out of two bottles," replied Harry, "that I filled with ice-water before we started from Harlem."

"And is that all the water you intended to take?"

"Well, we didn't think much about it, I guess," Harry replied, "but we can go ashore here at the hotel and fill the bottles again."

"Bottles won't do," said Charley. "We must have a

cask of water if we're going to cruise on the ocean. Head her for the steamboat landing, Tom, and we'll try to get a water-cask."

The only thing that the landlord of the hotel could let the boys have was an empty ten-gallon beer keg. Before it could be used for fresh water, it had to be rinsed about a dozen times with cold water, and then scalded with hot water. Even then the water with which the boys filled it tasted unpleasantly of beer, but as Charley assured his companions, any water that was not positively unwholesome would be very welcome if they were to find themselves perishing of thirst. Harry's bottles were filled with drinking water, and with this and the beer-cask the boys returned to the boat.

"Does anybody know what provisions we have on board?" inquired Charley.

"Well," said Harry, "I can remember pretty well what we bought, for I bought nearly everything myself, and have got the bill somewhere. Then there is a lot of cake and sandwiches and things that we brought from home with us the day we started."

"Would you mind making out a list of them, and keeping an account of what we use and what we buy?" said Charley. "I'd like to know every day just what provisions we've got to depend upon, and then I can take the responsibility of seeing that we don't run short of food, as we did of water. We must remember that we're making a regular cruise, and not sailing up and down the river for pleasure."

"All right," replied Harry. "You shall have the list the first time I get a chance to make it. I believe as much as you do in having everything ship-shape."

They were now nearing the inlet, and Charley began to feel anxious about the wind. As nearly as he could judge from the chart, the wind, as it was blowing from the southwest, would enable them to sail out of the inlet, but it was quite possible that the channel might lie in such a direction as to prevent the *Ghost* from making the attempt until the wind should change. It was nearly four o'clock, the time when the excursion steamers were starting for New York, and it was necessary to keep a look-out for them, for the

steamboat channel was narrow and winding, and though the *Ghost* might apparently be quite out of the path of an approaching steamer, it was always possible that the steamer would suddenly swing round and head directly for the sailboat. The steamers, however, all passed safely on their way, and disappeared as they rounded the further point of the beach, and went out of the inlet.

The boys were in excellent spirits, and did not feel the slightest uneasiness about their expected sail on the Atlantic. It seemed the easiest thing in the world to run out of the inlet, and to coast along the beach until they should be once more in the safe shelter of the bay. Never were boys more astonished than they were to find, when they came within sight of the inlet, that across it stretched a line of white breakers through which it seemed absurd to think of sailing a boat.

"That can't possibly be the inlet," said Harry. "There isn't any channel through these breakers."

"It's the inlet, sure enough," replied Charley; "but it looks as if there was a bar right across it."

"Perhaps the bar is put up at night, and they forgot to take it down this morning," suggested Joe.

"How could anybody put a bar across a big inlet?" asked Tom, seriously.

"Charley means there's a sand-bar under the water," said Harry.

"Tom, did you ever see a joke in your life?" asked Joe.

"No, and nobody else ever saw a joke. What do you think a joke looks like? Is it round or square?"

"Joe's are usually flat," said Harry. "But what's the use of talking in this way? What we want to do is to get out of that inlet."

"Let go all your halyards, Joe, and then drop the anchor overboard. We'll stop here awhile, and make up our minds what to do," ordered Charley.

The *Ghost* was soon riding quietly at anchor in three feet of water. Charley looked carefully at the line of breakers, wondering where the channel could possibly lie. Suddenly it occurred to him that the breakers were not caused by a bar, but by the tide, which was running out of the bay,

meeting the swell of the ocean. "There's a channel there somewhere, deep enough for big steamboats, and if we only knew just where it was, we'd try it," said Charley, after studying the matter for some time.

"Shall we get through the breakers without getting full of water?" inquired Tom.

"I don't know. I suppose we'll have to take our chances. Boats do go through the inlet every day, and I never heard of one getting swamped."

"Let's wait here until we see some boat go in or out. We can see how she gets through, and where the channel is," suggested Tom.

The idea was a good one, and the boys all agreed to wait. In the course of half-an-hour a fishing-boat no larger than the *Ghost* made its appearance, coming from the direction of Canarsie, and bound out of the inlet. The boys watched her closely, and noticed just what course she took. When she reached the breakers, she passed through them as easily as if she was in smooth water, only a little spray flying over her bow, and not a drop apparently entering her cockpit.

"Pshaw! we've been waiting here for nothing," exclaimed the captain. "Hoist that mainsail, the port watch. Up with the anchor, the starboard watch. Now run up the jib, Joe, and one of you fellows haul in the jib-sheet. Look out for your heads, everybody, when the boom swings around."

The *Ghost*, turning her head toward the inlet, ran straight for the breakers. The boys had confidence in their captain and in the boat; but it did seem rather nervous work to sail straight into the curling and breaking seas. Charley himself began to fear that he had made a mistake, but it was now too late to draw back.

"Come aft here, everybody!" he exclaimed. "We must keep her head as high out of the water as we can. Now, boys, hold on to something, and don't be frightened. It will all be over in a minute."

The *Ghost* was now flying with the wind and tide, and in another moment she was in the rough water. She drove her nose straight into a curling sea that broke on her deck with a crash as if it would stave it in. A shower of spray

flew all over the boat, and half a hogshead of water poured over the wash-board into the cockpit. But the good little boat did not seem to mind it. The danger was passed



AMONG THE BREAKERS.

almost in a second, and the *Ghost* was now fairly at sea, in smooth water, and Charley was easing the main-sheet, and heading her to the eastward.

THE CRUISE OF THE "GHOST."

"There! we did it, you see," cried Charley, exultingly. "Only," he added, "I don't want to do it again."

"We're as wet as we used to be in the *Whitewing*," said Joe; "and I'm afraid everything on board is as wet as we are."

"Then don't lose any time in baling her out," said Charley. "Get a couple of tin pans and bale, while one of you pumps. We'll have the water out in no time."

It took, however, a good deal of time to pump the boat dry, and Charley secretly admitted to himself that had the *Ghost* shipped another such sea she would have been in a dangerous situation.





CHAPTER IV.

HOW do all boats that go through the inlet manage, I wonder?" asked Tom. "They can't all get as wet as we did, and we saw that the boat that went through just ahead of us didn't take in any water."

"That was just her luck," Charley answered. "We followed right after her, and happened to catch it pretty heavy."

"But I don't believe it's always so rough at the inlet. If it is, nine boats out of ten would get full of water."

"I'll tell you how they manage it," exclaimed Charley. "They wait till the tide is just right, and that's what we ought to have done. Don't you see there is a swell coming in from the ocean, and it meets the tide going out. Now if the tide was coming in, or if it was slack water, the inlet would be smooth enough. Boys, I made a mistake in starting before the tide changed, and, come to think of it, I've been awfully stupid about this whole business. If we had waited two or three hours, we could have gone through the inlet without the least trouble, that is, if the wind hadn't changed."

"It's going to change before long," remarked Harry. "The breeze is dying away now, and in a little while we'll have a dead calm."

As the wind died out, it grew uncomfortably hot; and as the *Ghost* had passed beyond the houses at Far Rockaway, the boys took in sail, anchored, and had a splendid bath. After the bath they were, of course, ravenously hungry, and

so proceeded to get dinner. By this time the breeze had completely vanished, and the *Ghost* was lying motionless on the glassy waters. Suddenly the low growling of thunder was heard. The clouds had come up from the west without attracting the notice of the boys, and they now saw that a thunder-shower would soon reach them.

"We're going to get wet again," said Joe, gloomily. "I think I'll quit wearing clothes altogether, so that I can manage to have something dry to put on."

"What's the use of getting wet?" said Harry. "We can rig up our canvas cabin, and we won't get a drop of rain on us."

"If we're going to do that, we must be quick about it, for it's going to rain in a very few minutes," said Charley. "I think it's the best thing we can do, though this isn't the best anchorage in the world. Come, Joe, you and I will roll up the sails, while the other fellows rig up the canvas. We've got to make things pretty snug, for it may blow hard."

The sails were quickly furled, and Tom and Harry had the canvas cabin ready just as the first drops of rain began to fall. The boys crept under the canvas, congratulating themselves that they had a secure shelter, and that they had noticed the approach of the shower in time to prepare for it.

The wind blew very hard, and the *Ghost* began to pitch uneasily.

"It's a good job we've got such a lot of cable," said Charley. "When I saw that the *Ghost* had fifty feet of inch rope coiled up on her deck, I couldn't help laughing, and wondering if Harry expected to anchor in fifty feet of water; but after all, a long cable is a handy thing to have, and we needn't have the least fear that we shall drag our anchor or part our cable."

"This canvas cabin works splendidly," remarked Harry. "Tom, you deserve all our thanks for inventing it. Why, it's fairly dry on the inside." So saying, Harry put the palm of his hand against the canvas over his head, and rubbed it to see if it was wet.

"Now you've done it," cried Tom. "Don't you know how a tent will leak if you touch it when it is wet? You'll have a stream of water running in here, presently."

Tom was right. In a few minutes the water began to drip steadily on the unfortunate Harry, who was forced to sit with a tin pail in his lap to catch the stream that he had introduced into the cabin.

The rain was now pouring down in a perfect cataract, and the gusts of wind were trying their best to tear the canvas away. Tom felt a strong desire to look out and see how things were getting on. Accordingly, without saying anything to anybody, he quietly unfastened the opening in the after-end of the cabin, and put his head out into the rain. No sooner did the wind find an entrance into the cabin through the opening Tom had made, than the canvas gave a tremendous flap, which broke the cords that held it in place ; and had not Harry caught hold of it, and dragged it inside the cockpit, it would have been overboard in a second.

"Well, I never in all my life !" began the astonished Tom.

"I told you we were going to get wet," said Joe. "We always do. We got wet about three times every day in the *Whitewing*."

"There's nothing to be done but to sit here till the shower's over," said Charley. "It can't last very long, and it won't do us any harm. You're sure the covers of those cushions are waterproof, Harry ?"

"Oh, they're all right. They'll be dry enough if we just rub them off with a towel."

"It's all my fault," said Tom ; "but who would ever have thought that the whole concern would blow away that way ?"

"Never mind, Tom," said Charley. "It will teach us to use stronger cords to lash the canvas down with next time. There ! the sun's coming out again, and the rain is about over. Let's try and get the inside of the boat dry, and the canvas rigged up again, before dark."

The cabin was a little damp, it must be confessed, but the beds and blankets were dry. This time the canvas was lashed down so stoutly that it would have stood a gale of wind, and under it the crew of the *Ghost* slept without hearing the singing of a single mosquito, and without suffering any unpleasant effects from the dampness.

The boys had finished their breakfast the next morning,

and were preparing to resume their voyage, when they were hailed by a man in a row-boat.

"Where be you from?" asked the new-comer.

"From New York," replied Charley. "Whereabouts is the best channel in Hempstead Bay? Do we want to keep near the beach, or near the other shore?"

"Where be you going?"

"To Amityville or thereabouts. Will we have any trouble in finding the way there?"

"Who be you, anyway?"

"Oh, never mind him," said Harry, in a low tone.

"He'll ask questions all day, and never answer any."

But the man was not quite so exasperating as Harry imagined. After looking at the *Ghost* with some admiration, and expressing the opinion that she was "a tidy boat," he condescended to answer Charley's questions about the channel.

"Channel? Why, bless you, you can't find the channel to save your life. It jest winds in among the islands, and runs every which way. You've got to be brung up on this bay before you can ever learn the channel."

"But we can find it if we keep searching for it, can't we?" inquired Charley.

"You'll be growed up before you do," answered the man.

"You can try it, I s'pose, if you want to. You must keep a-gradooally working up to the nor'ard, and if one of you gets up the mast and watches the colour of the water, mebbe you can find the way. Say, where was you last night—aboard this consarn?"

"We've been here ever since that thunder-shower came up."

"You hain't seen nothing of no suspicious-looking fellows in a row-boat, have ye?"

The boys told him that they had seen nobody since they had cast anchor.

"Well," resumed the man, "you keep a smart look-out. There's been half-a-dozen sail-boats stole out of this bay in the last two weeks by some fellows that sneak 'round in a row-boat at night. Why, they stole a coloured man's boat last week while he was asleep in her. Chucked him right

overboard, they did. Those fellows is regular pirates, and if they catch you lying at anchor in some out-of-the-way place, you'll have trouble with 'em."

The man's caution did not alarm the boys, but they thanked him, and said they would remember his advice.

"We'll set an anchor watch at night," said Charley. "It's what we ought to do, anyway. This anchoring the boat, and then going to sleep and letting her look out for



THE MAN IN THE ROW-BOAT.

herself, is too much like the way Frenchmen manage ships. We might have been run down by some big fishing-boat last night, for we didn't hang out our lantern, and we were all sound asleep."

The wind was fair, and the crew of the *Ghost*, thinking that the man had greatly exaggerated the difficulty of finding the channel, were not disturbed when they presently found

themselves in what looked like a narrow creek winding through a low marshy meadow. Charley climbed up the mast hoops, and saw that the *Ghost* had entered an archipelago. In every direction, as far as he could see, the low meadow was divided into hundreds of little islands, separated by narrow creeks varying in width from a few feet to a dozen rods. He made up his mind that it was going to be a difficult task to find a channel deep enough for the *Ghost*, for he could see that the water had the appearance of being very shallow in nearly all the creeks. He had just decided on the course that it would be best to steer for the next ten minutes, when the *Ghost* ran on a mud-bank, and came to a stop.

It was some time before she could be pushed off again, so deep and sticky was the mud; and when, at last, she was once more on her course, Charley took the helm, and sent Joe aloft to look for the channel. Joe had no sooner climbed the mast hoops than the *Ghost* was aground again, and another half-hour had to be spent in getting her afloat. The whole morning was passed in this unsatisfactory way, and the boat was at least half the time stuck in the mud. At noon the crew let her remain aground while they had lunch, and rested for an hour. Then they resumed the tiresome business of running aground and getting afloat again, and when the end of the afternoon approached, they anchored in a little cove where the water happened to be deep enough to float the boat, and acknowledged to one another that the inquisitive old man was right, and that they would probably have to spend a long time in working their way out from among the islands.

"I don't believe what the old man said about pirates," said Harry, as they were rigging the canvas cabin, and preparing for the night; "but I did see what you may think was a suspicious-looking boat when I was up aloft this afternoon."

"Let's hear about it," said Charley.

"It was a row-boat tied up to the shore in a little bit of a creek about half a mile from here, and there were three men lying asleep in her. Now, what were they doing that for, I'd like to know?"

"I don't see what could induce anybody to row into such a place as this, and then go to sleep. If they had been fishing, now, I could understand it," said Charley. "What sort of looking men were they?"

"I could only see the face of one of them. He woke up, and lifted up his head to look at me, and he didn't look a bit like a fisherman. He seemed to me just like one of those fellows that you see in New York—a regular 'rough,' you know."

"You're sure he saw our boat?" asked Charley.

"Sure as sure can be," replied Harry. "And he watched it very sharp, too."

"Boys," asked Charley, "has any one got a pistol? I know there isn't any gun aboard."

"We didn't bring pistols, for Uncle John wouldn't consent to it," answered Harry; "and he said we wouldn't need a gun. I've got a load of powder for the cannon, but it wouldn't be much good against the pirates that the old man told us of."

"We have got a cannon, haven't we?" said Charley, thoughtfully. "I'd forgotten that. Let me have a look at it."

He examined the cannon closely, and carefully dried the bore with the help of his handkerchief and a small stick. Then he came back to the cockpit, and asked, "Does anybody happen to have anything that will do for shot?"

"I've got about a handful of marbles," said Joe. "I forgot to leave them behind."

"They're just the thing," said Charley. "Give them to me, and let me have a lot of that thick brown paper that was wrapped round the stove, provided there is any of it left."

Charley wrapped the marbles in three or four thicknesses of paper, and then loaded the cannon, ramming the package of marbles close up against the powder. Then he laid a piece of cloth over the cannon to protect it from the dew, and put the powder-flask in his pocket. "Now if anybody attacks us," he exclaimed, "we can give him a dose of canister-shot."

"You'll have to ask him to be kind enough to come

right up in front of the cannon," remarked Joe, "for you can't aim it at anybody while it's lashed fast."

"That's so," said Charley. "I am smart not to think of cutting the lashing." So saying, he cut the cannon loose, so that he could turn it in any direction. "Now, boys, turn in, and I'll keep a look out till ten o'clock, for I'm not a bit sleepy. I don't believe anybody will trouble us, but at any rate we'll take care not to be surprised."

The boys felt so safe, in spite of what the old man had said, that they were soon peacefully sleeping, with the exception of Charley, who was sitting very wide awake, with his back against the mast. It was not yet ten o'clock when Tom was awakened by feeling a hand laid on his forehead. "Hush," whispered Charley. "I can hear a row-boat coming towards us. Wake up Harry and Joe and come on deck; but don't make any noise. I've unshipped the tiller, and you can use it for a club."





CHAPTER V.



HE sound of oars could be distinctly heard, and the boys listened breathlessly. The night was so dark that they could see but a little distance from their own vessel, and could only judge of the distance of the invisible row-boat, and the direction in which it was moving, by the sound.

As they stood shivering in the cold mist, expecting every moment to be attacked by thieves, they could not be said to be enjoying themselves. They would have given a great deal to have been safe at home and in their warm beds. As they afterwards acknowledged, they were a good deal frightened; and there are few men who, in the same circumstances, would not have felt that they were in a very awkward situation.

"You'll tell us what to do," whispered Tom to the Captain, "and we'll do it."

"If they come, we've got to fight," answered Charley; 'for if we were to let them take our boat, we'd starve to death out here in the marshes.'

The sound of the oars came nearer and nearer, and presently the boys caught a glimpse of a boat gliding through the water only a few rods away.

"Perhaps they won't see us," Harry whispered in Charley's ear.

At this moment the oars stopped, and a voice said, "Thar's that yacht belonging to them boys that I was telling you I see this mornin', down by Rockaway. Somebody

must have piloted 'em, or they couldn't have got through the islands."

"Oh, go on," replied another voice. "We won't get to Amityville in half an hour if you stop to talk."

The oars resumed their regular dip; the row-boat disappeared in the darkness, and in a little while the silence was as complete as if there was no one within a league of the *Ghost*.

"Now we'll go to sleep again," said Tom, still speaking in a low voice; "though, come to think of it, my turn to watch must have come round by this time."

"It's just ten o'clock," replied Charley. "Well, we're more frightened than hurt; but the thieves may pay us a visit yet. When you call any of us, just remember that if you put your hand on a fellow's forehead, he will wake up cool and sensible; but if you shake him, he'll be very likely to jump, or sing out, or do something of the kind. Good-night all, and don't go to sleep on your watch, Tom."

Harry, Joe, and Charley crept back to their blankets and prepared to sleep, while Tom, sitting on deck, tried to keep awake. What was very strange was, that while Tom, whose duty it was to keep awake, grew horribly sleepy, the other boys, who had a right to go to sleep, found themselves as broad awake as they had ever been in their lives. No one spoke for fear of keeping his neighbour awake; but the frequency with which somebody rolled over, or drew a long and tired breath, showed that there were no sleepy boys in the *Ghost's* cabin. By-and-by Charley, whose hearing was very sharp, thought that he heard oars once more. Making his way softly on deck, he listened, and found that he was not mistaken. He woke Tom, who was sleeping serenely, and sent him to rouse the other boys; but they had already heard the whispered order of the Captain, and were on deck before they could be called.

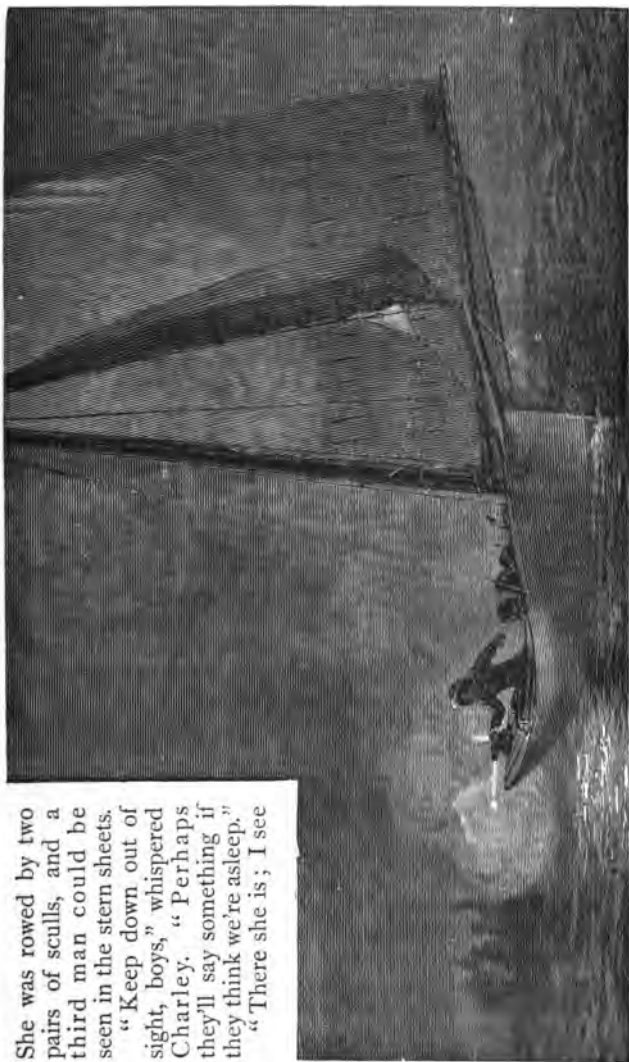
"It may be another fisherman going home late," said Charley. "I wish they'd keep better hours, and not rouse people up at midnight. There, I see them. They're coming this way, I think."

A row-boat, approaching by a different channel from that which the fishermen had followed, was now dimly visible.

She was rowed by two pairs of sculls, and a third man could be seen in the stern sheets.

"Keep down out of sight, boys," whispered Charley. "Perhaps they'll say something if they think we're asleep."

"There she is; I see



THE DEFEAT OF THE RIVER PIRATES.

her," said one of the men, in a voice loud enough to be heard by the listening boys.

"Them boys are all asleep," said another. "Row up to her easy, and we can dump 'em on to the meadow before they get waked up."

"Boat ahoy!" called out Charley, springing up. "Who are you, and what do you want?"

"We're the United States' frigate *Constitution*," replied one of the men. "We want to hear you chaps say your catechism." So saying, the men resumed their oars, and rowed toward the *Ghost*.

"Keep off!" cried Charley. "If you come near us, we will fire into you. I give you fair warning."

The men who were rowing stopped for a moment, but the man in the stern, ordering them to row on, fired a pistol, the bullet of which whistled over Tom's head, and made him "duck" in the most polite manner. On came the row-boat, but Charley, who had hastily pointed the gun, scratched a match, and stood sheltering the flame with his hand, and waiting for the sulphur to burn out, as coolly as if he were in his own room. In a few seconds the blue flame was succeeded by the bright glow of the burning wood, and touching the match to the priming, Charley stepped hastily back, while the explosion that followed sounded to the excited boys like the roar of a thirty-two pounder.

One or two of the marbles hit the row-boat, for the rattle made by them was distinctly heard; but most of Charley's canister-shot flew over the heads of the men without touching them. They were, however, thoroughly alarmed, and, putting the boat around, rowed rapidly away. Charley had dropped on his knees the instant after he had fired, and was now reloading with the utmost haste, ramming down a handful of nails that he drew from his pocket, where he had kept them in reserve, wrapped in a torn piece of his handkerchief.

"Hurrah!" shouted Harry. "We've beat 'em. I only wish we had sunk their boat."

"That wouldn't have done us any good," said Charley. "If they don't come back again, I shall be entirely satisfied."

"What a bang the old cannon made!" exclaimed Joe.
"I wonder if we really hit anybody."

"If we had, we would have known it," replied Charley.
"I think we've frightened them away. They know that every yacht carries a gun, and they won't suspect that we hadn't anything but marbles to fire at them. If we do have to fire again, we shall do some mischief, for I've loaded the gun with nails, and they will do twice as much execution as marbles."

Of course nobody thought of trying to go to sleep again; so the crew of the *Ghost* sat on deck with waterproof blankets over their shoulders, and waited for the renewal of the attack. They grew tired of waiting after a while, and Harry proposed that they should hoist the jib, and with the light west wind that was blowing try to make their way out from among the islands into the open bay.

"We know," added he, "from what the fisherman said that we are in the channel, and we must be nearly out of this wilderness, for don't you remember the man he had with him expected to get to Amityville in half an hour? So let's go on. It will be easier than waiting here all night."

The suggestion was warmly received, and it was not long before the canvas cabin was stowed away, and the *Ghost* was slowly feeling her way through the darkness. Charley did not venture to hoist the mainsail, for he was afraid of running aground so hard that it would be difficult to get the boat afloat again. Joe stood at the bow, and tried to see as far ahead as possible, while the other boys kept a lookout on all sides for the piratical row-boat. After a little while the channel grew broader, and they were congratulating themselves that they must be nearly out of the archipelago, when once more the dip of oars was heard right astern.

"Haul up that mainsail, the port watch, just as quick as you can," cried the Captain. "The sheet's all slack, and you can get it up. Bring the gun aft here, Joe, and mind you don't drop it overboard."

Had there been more wind, the two boys could not have got up the mainsail with the wind nearly aft; but as it was, they had it up and the sheet trimmed in almost as little time

as it takes to tell it. In the meantime Joe had lugged the cannon aft, and put it on the new "overhang," or extension, that Charley had added to the boat. He then took the helm for a minute, while Charley primed the gun, and put his hat carefully on the touch-hole, so as to keep the powder dry.

"Now lie down on the bottom boards, all of you," said the Captain. "If those fellows are after us, they'll probably use their pistols, and there's no use in more than one of us getting hit." Charley himself, like a prudent fellow, managed to dispose the greater part of his body below the wash-board, though he had to keep his head and one arm above the deck.

The *Ghost* moved much more rapidly now that her mainsail was drawing, but the oars were evidently coming nearer. Before long a pistol-shot was fired, which was evidently meant for the *Ghost*, although the bullet flew wide of the mark. Charley sailed the boat without feeling the least alarm, for he knew that the chance of his being hit by a pistol-bullet from a boat that was too far off to be in sight was extremely small. But the thieves were steadily gaining on the yacht, and when they finally came in sight, it was plain that they were rowing their very hardest.

Charley rose up, and steadying the tiller between his knees, told Joe to light a match, and keep the flame out of sight until he should call for it. The man in the stern of the row-boat, who was apparently the leader of the gang, called out to him to throw the *Ghost* up into the wind, or it would be the worse for him. Charley paid no attention to him, but, carefully taking the match from Joe, leaned down, aimed the gun, and fired.

The aim was excellent, and luck was also on the side of the *Ghost*. The load of nails struck the row-boat, which was now not more than forty feet away, full in the bow, and tore a hole in her, scattering a shower of splinters among the men, at least one of whom was wounded, for he cried out, "I'm hit." The rowers instantly dropped their oars, and from the excited exclamations which they made it was evident that the boat was in danger of sinking.

"Come up, boys," shouted Charley, gaily. "We've beat

them this time, sure. They won't fire any more pistols at us to-night."

The boys sprang up, and gave three cheers; but as the last cheer was still ringing in the air, there was a heavy crash, and the enthusiastic boys fell one over another into the bottom of the boat, while a hoarse voice shouted, "Get out of that! What do you mean by running into us?" In their excitement they had allowed the *Ghost* to run directly into a large oyster sloop that was lying at anchor without any light in her rigging.

Making the *Ghost* fast to the sloop, Charley climbed on board the latter, and quickly explained to the three men who were on deck how it happened that they were sailing about the bay at two o'clock in the morning.

"So it was you that was firing, was it?" said the Captain of the sloop. "Well, now, I want to know! Fired a cannon right slap into 'em, did ye? Well, no; that beats me."

"It beat them, too," remarked Joe.

"You didn't kill none of 'em, did ye?"

"No, and I don't think we hurt anybody very much; but we knocked a hole in their boat," said Charley.

"Hope you did. They won't drown, for they're regular wharf rats; but the sheriff'll catch 'em on the meadows to-morrow. How big a ball does that gun of yours carry?"

"We hadn't any balls, so we fired a lot of nails wrapped up in a handkerchief at them. I shouldn't have thought the nails would have held together, but they did, and I know there was a hole knocked in the boat by the way the men acted."

"They're the same fellows that stole Sam Harris's cat-boat last week; but I guess they won't steal no more—not for the present."

The oystermen who had been awakened by the cannon, and had supposed that it was fired by some steamer that had run ashore on the beach, were now ready to turn in again. The captain of the sloop told the boys to lower their sails, and to make the yacht fast to the sloop's stern.

"You won't be troubled no more to-night, and we'll tow you over to Amityville to-morrow morning, if you want to

go there," said the Captain. "But you'd better go to sleep now. There'll be somebody on the look-out on board the sloop, so you needn't be afraid of nothing."

Thanking him heartily, the boys went back to their own vessel, lowered the sails, and, making the painter fast to the stern rail of the sloop, prepared to take a morning nap. They did not take the trouble to rig up the canvas cabin, but covered themselves with their waterproof blankets, leaving only their heads exposed to the dew.

"That's the first time I've been under fire," remarked Charley, as he tucked the waterproof around him.

"Weren't you afraid when they fired at you?" asked Joe.

"Yes, I suppose I was; that is, I didn't want to be hit, and I wished I was where nobody would fire pistols at me; but I knew that there wasn't one chance in a hundred that I would be hit."

"I hate this whole fighting business," said Tom. "Who would ever have thought that peaceable boys, who don't do any mischief or interfere with anybody, would have to have real fights? If we'd killed one of those fellows, it would have spoiled all our fun. I couldn't have enjoyed the cruise one bit."

"Well, we didn't kill anybody, and there isn't the least chance that we'll have any more fighting," said Charley.

"We owe our getting out of trouble to-night to you, Charley," said Harry. "If old Admiral Farragut had been here, he couldn't have done better than you did."

"That's so," cried Tom and Joe together.

"Oh, come, now," said Charley, "you're too complimentary. I was captain, and it was my duty to do what I could to keep the boat from being stolen. Any one of you fellows would have done just the same in my place. Good-night, all. I'll be asleep in three minutes, if you don't talk to me."

He was probably as good as his word; but his companions, who, now that the danger was over, found that they were very tired, were asleep before they had time to calculate whether or not three minutes had come and gone.



CHAPTER VI.

WHEN the boys awoke, soon after dawn, a thick fog hid everything except the oyster-sloop from their view. The crew of the latter were already on deck, and as soon as the Captain saw that the boys were putting away their blankets, and getting out their breakfast dishes, he invited them to come to breakfast. There is nothing more cheerless than cooking your own breakfast in a cold wet fog, and the young yachtsmen, who were feeling rather tired in consequence of loss of sleep and the excitement of the previous night, were glad to accept the Captain's invitation. Harry, foreseeing that the oystermen's coffee would not be quite suited to his fastidious taste, and also desiring to make some return for the Captain's kindness, asked to be allowed to furnish the breakfast-table with coffee made by himself. The oystermen were pleased with the proposal, and Harry, taking the *Ghost's* coffee-pot to the galley, made what the Captain declared was the "bulliest" coffee he had ever drunk.

They sat down to breakfast in the cosy little cabin of the sloop, and the Captain told them all about the oyster fishery. He was on his way to Amityville, where he lived, with a cargo of clams; for, during the summer months, when there was no demand for oysters, he loaded his vessel with clams and scallops, which are in season all the year round. He prophesied that the fog would last all day, but assured the boys that, by steering due north-east by compass, they would reach the northern shore of the bay, and could then

safely pursue their voyage by keeping close to the land, where the deepest water in the Great South Bay is usually found. During the night the tide had ebbed, leaving the sloop aground in the mud, and it would be several hours before she would be afloat again. The boys would have preferred to let the sloop lead the way, and to follow her through the fog, but they did not care to wait until she would be afloat. So, bidding their new friends good-bye, they hoisted their sails, and with a fair breeze, just strong enough to give their boat steerage-way, they started to cross the bay.

They neither saw nor heard any other boat during the hour that they sailed silently on the course given them by the Captain of the sloop. At first they felt a little nervous, and had a dread of being run down by some big schooner or other craft; but in a little while they began to enjoy the novelty of sailing in a dense fog, and were rather sorry when the *Ghost* unexpectedly ran her bow against the low shore of the mainland of Long Island.

What to do next was the question. Nobody wanted to spend the day moored to the shore, and waiting for the fog to lift; and as Charley, in consulting the chart, found that the shore-line was very irregular, indented with a succession of long narrow bays separated by low sandy capes, neither he nor his comrades liked the idea of keeping close to it, and thus wasting time in a very uninteresting way. While they were still studying the chart, they heard what was evidently a breakfast-bell ringing a little to the west of them.

"That bell must be in Amityville," said Charley, "and we must be close by this little creek that is laid down on the chart. Now let's find that creek, and then we'll know exactly where we are, and can tell what course to steer without following the shore."

"I'll go ashore," said Harry, "and hunt up the creek, and get some eggs, and a loaf of bread. It will be twice as much fun to sail straight ahead through the fog as it would be to keep along shore, just as if the *Ghost* was a canal-boat."

"I'll go with you," said Joe. "I am getting the cramps sitting still in this boat so long."

The two explorers stepped ashore, and immediately vanished in the fog. Charley and Tom presently heard a dismal exclamation in Joe's unmistakable voice, and in a short time he returned, announcing that the creek was only three or four boat-lengths distant. He was dripping with water, having found the creek by unexpectedly walking into it from off a boat-landing.

"Wet again, boys," he remarked, sadly, as he proceeded to find a dry shirt and trousers; "the next time we go cruising I'm going to wear a waterproof suit like Captain Boyton's. This is our fourth day out, and I've fallen overboard twice, been rained on once, and walked off a pier once. I wonder how it would do to rub myself all over with oil. Do you think I'd shed water then?"

"You couldn't rub yourself with oil, and then put your clothes on, without getting them all greasy," observed Tom.

"Then I won't try oil. But the least you fellows can do is to wring me out. I can never get myself dry by rubbing with a towel."

"We'll wring you as soon as we get time," said Charley, kindly; "we'll begin with your neck, if you say so. But here comes Harry with the provisions. Shove the boat off, Tom, and we'll steer for a big cape that is just this side of Islip. The end of the cape ought to bear just east-northeast from the mouth of the creek Joe discovered."

The *Ghost* was soon under sail again, and the shore was lost in the fog. The breeze freshened a little, but the fog remained as thick as ever. Occasionally, a fog-horn could be faintly heard in the distance, but whether it was blown on board a vessel on the bay, or a vessel at sea a little distance beyond the beach, it was impossible to tell.

"We ought to have brought a horn along with us," remarked Charley; "and it would be a good idea to stop somewhere and buy one. We ought to have green and red side-lights too. We haven't any right to sail at night without them."

"Why don't you insist on having a surgeon and a chaplain, and two or three life-boats, while you're about it?" said Joe. "You forget that the *Ghost* isn't a man-of-war going on a three years' cruise. We can get along without

such luxuries as side-lights and surgeons. I'll tell you one thing we do want, though."

"What's that?" asked Charley.

"We want somebody on the look-out in a fog like this."

"That's so," exclaimed Charley. "I forgot all about it. Go to the bow, Joe, and keep the sharpest kind of a look-out. Boys, I'm not fit to be Captain, for I've neglected one of the first duties of an officer."

"We'll forgive you," said Harry, "especially as I don't believe there's another boat on the bay to-day."

"Of course there isn't really much danger of running into anything, unless it may be a sloop lying at anchor. Still, we ———"

"What's that?" exclaimed Tom.

"Sail on the port bow!" yelled Joe, at the top of his lungs.

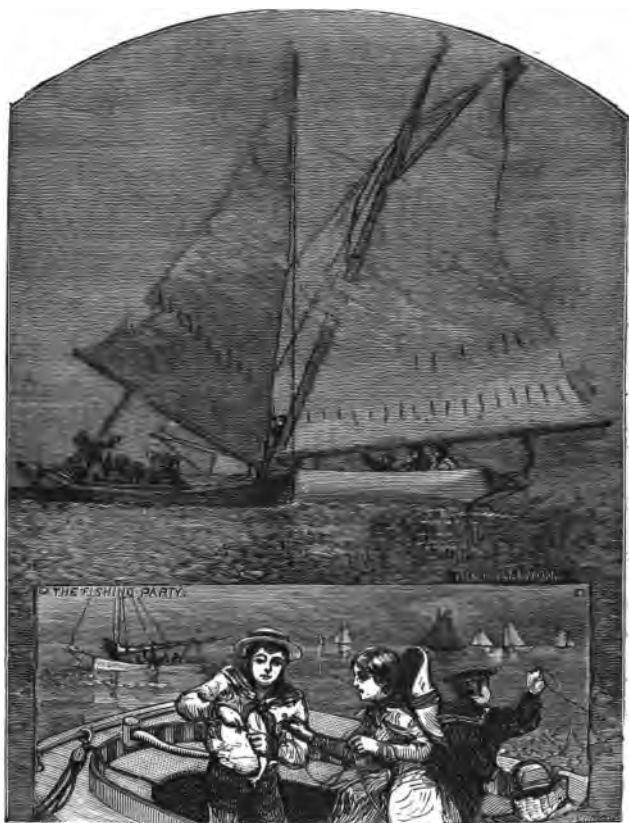
While Joe was still speaking, the mainsail of a big cat-boat suddenly loomed up through the fog, and before the least thing could be done to avoid a collision, the strange boat struck the *Ghost* amidships, and a chorus of girls' voices cried out, "Oh, my!"

"No harm done," called out Charley. "Let go the jib-sheet, Joe. Now hold on to the side of that boat, boys, and don't let her get away till we see if she is damaged." So saying, he put the helm hard down, bringing the *Ghost* up into the wind. The other boat had already dropped her sail, and the two vessels were soon lying quietly side by side.

On board the cat-boat were four girls, three of them about fourteen years old, and the fourth about ten. There was also a boy, who did not seem to be as old as Joe, but who was apparently one of the "Bay boys," who spend most of their time during the summer in sailing-boats of various kinds, and who at twelve years old are often thoroughly good sailors. The boy did not seem in the least alarmed, but the girls were terribly frightened. "Do, please, help us," implored the tallest and prettiest of the four, addressing Charley almost as respectfully as if he were a man. "We are awfully afraid to be out here in this fog."

"May I ask how you came to be out here?" asked Charley.

"Why, we started to go on a fishing picnic, and there wasn't any fog when we started. Father and all the ladies and gentlemen are in the other boat, and we've got all the



IN THE GREAT SOUTH BAY.

provisions. We were going to an island somewhere—I don't know where—to have dinner, and to go fishing; but the fog came up, and we got lost, and we're so frightened!"

"I ain't lost very much," said the Bay boy; "that is, I can find my way back to the shore by the wind; but I hain't got no compass, and I don't feel very sure about fetching the island."

"When did the fog come up?" asked Charley.

"About three hours ago. It come up from the southwest, and if you've come that way, you've had it longer than we have."

"I don't exactly see how we can help you," said Charley to the girl who had spoken to him; "but we'll be delighted to do anything we can. If you like, we'll keep together, and try to find the island."

"Oh, I do wish you would!" exclaimed the girl. "It's so dreadful to be alone in this awful fog."

"Do you know how the island bears from the place where you started from?" Charley asked the Bay boy.

"Put me back there, and give me a compass, and I could hit it to an inch. Just try me once."

"We've got a compass," said Charley. "Let's run over to the shore and get our bearings, and then we'll head for the island."

This proposal delighted the girls, and accordingly both boats set their sails again, and running side by side, soon reached the shore. The Bay boy declared that he now knew exactly where he was, and what course to steer for the island.

"We want to steer a little east of south, and we'll fetch it," he said. "You go ahead with your boat, and keep her south, half east, and I'll follow right after you."

"You won't run away from us, will you, sir?" asked the pretty girl, and Charley thought that he had never seen anything half so pretty before.

"If you don't mind," he said, "I'll come on board your boat, and then you'll feel sure that our boats will keep together. Only you mustn't call me 'sir.' You take the helm, Tom," he continued, "and keep her south, half east; and you'd better slack the peak a little, or else you'll outslail us."

Without waiting to have his offer accepted, Charley sprang on board the cat-boat, and after trimming the sheet, sat down, half frightened at his rashness in thrusting himself among a boat-load of girls.

"Are you staying near here, sir?" asked the pretty girl.

"No. We're from New York, and bound on a cruise through the South Bay. That is, the other boys are from New York, but I am from Annapolis. I'm in the navy."

"In the navy!" exclaimed all the girls together. "Aren't we in luck, Nina," added one of them, addressing the girl who had won Charley's admiration, "to have a naval officer to take care of us? Now I don't mind the fog one bit."

"I'm not much of an officer yet," said Charley, laughing; "and you've got somebody here who can manage a sail-boat better than I can."

"Are you a lieutenant, sir, or a captain of the fore-top?" asked Nina.

"I'm only a cadet midshipman; but you really mustn't call me 'sir.' My name is Charley Smith, and I'd be very much obliged if you'd call me Charley."

"And mine's Nina Stone; and as everybody calls me Nina, I suppose you ought to."

So in a few minutes Charley and Nina were talking like old friends, and the young Captain of the *Ghost* found the time pass so pleasantly, that he was sorry when, after a long sail, the island was reached, and the missing boat found at anchor, with all her passengers engaged in fishing for weak-fish.

Mr. Stone, the father of the pretty Nina, was greatly relieved at the arrival of his daughter; and when she had told him how the *Ghost* and her Captain had gone out of their way to escort the cat-boat to the island, he shook Charley and his companions warmly by the hand, and insisted that they should stay and join the picnic party at dinner. The fog was already beginning to grow thinner, and there was every prospect that it would soon vanish, and that the sun would come out. The boys were getting hungry, and were not at all averse to spending the afternoon in fishing. So they accepted Mr. Stone's invitation, and the whole party went ashore, and had a delicious dinner of fresh weak-fish, broiled on the coals. After dinner they went on board the boats, pushed out in the channel, and, anchoring, devoted the rest of the day to fishing. The sun was now shining brightly, the fish were abundant and

ravenous, and the pretty Nina was fishing by the side of Charley, who baited her hook and took off her fish as fast as she caught them. When the two cat-boats finally hauled up their anchors and prepared to return home, the boys felt as if they were parting from old friends. Mr. Stone invited them all to come and see him in New York, and Miss Nina told Charley that she would never forget his kindness to her. When her handkerchief could no longer be seen waving over the waters, Charley said that he was tired of fishing, and thought the cabin had better be rigged up, and that all hands had better turn in early.

It was rather a gloomy ending of a delightful day. The young Captain evidently felt very little inclined to talk.

"If we meet any more pretty girls," whispered Joe to Harry, as they were lashing down the sides of the cabin, "we'll have to get a new captain. I can't see what some fellows see in girls. They can't play football, nor wrestle, nor do anything rational, and I'd like to know what use they are, anyway."

"Girls are all very well in their place," said Harry, "but I don't think they ought to go sailing. They can do sums, for instance, for my sister does mine for me sometimes. But I say, that was a pretty girl, though, wasn't she? and she seemed real nice and jolly."

"She's the best girl I ever met," exclaimed Tom.

"That's so," said Joe. "I was only pretending not to think so, because I didn't want to make Charley jealous. I tell you what, boys, we'll get her to go fishing again with us some day."





CHAPTER VII.

THE next morning the sky was grey, and filled with flying clouds. The wind was blowing fresh and cold from the north-west, and the boys shivered, until their morning bath set their blood racing through their veins.

"What do you think of the weather, Tom?" asked Charley, as they were drinking their coffee.

"I don't think much of it," interrupted Joe. "It isn't half so good as the weather we had last summer."

"Junior officers will please not give their opinions until they are asked for," said the young Captain, in his severest official manner.

"I think," replied Tom, "that we're going to have a windy day, and I shouldn't be surprised if it rained before night."

"Not unless the wind backs around to the south-west," said Charley. "I think it will blow hard; but it doesn't very often rain with a north-west wind."

"Never mind if it doesn't rain," said Joe; "we'll get wet somehow, you can be sure."

"I think," said Charley, "that we'd better get up our anchor right away, for after awhile it may blow so hard that we'll have to run into some harbour for the rest of the day."

The *Ghost's* jib and mainsail were set, and with the wind on her port quarter she began to pile up the foam under her bow. In spite of the gloomy appearance of the sky and water, the speed of the boat put the boys in high spirits.

The bay was covered with white caps, and in some places there was quite a heavy sea ; but as the *Ghost* was running before it, no spray came on board, and Joe, in spite of his conviction that he must get wet, was dry and comfortable. The wind steadily increased, and before long Charley saw the necessity of reefing. So he brought the boat with her head to the wind, let go the anchor, and lowered the sails.

"Do you mean to say that we've got to anchor every time we reef?" asked Harry, as he was knotting the reef-points of the mainsail.

"It isn't necessary to anchor. We could put in a reef if we had no anchor with us ; but with as much wind as we have now, it makes the work of reefing a good deal easier if we are lying at anchor."

"Why couldn't we reef while the boat is running under her jib?" inquired Tom.

"You can't tie the reef-points unless the sail is down, and you can't get the sail down while the boat is before the wind, and the sail is full. We could throw her head up into the wind, and get the sail down, and then let her run off under the jib until we get through reefing ; but then we'd have to haul down the jib, and pull her head around with an oar, before we could set the mainsail again. Anchoring saves a whole lot of trouble, and there is no reason why we shouldn't anchor when we are where the anchor will take bottom."

With the reefed mainsail the *Ghost* behaved better than she had done. She rolled less, and steered more easily. The boys were delighted with the way in which she raced over the water, but occasionally, when they looked at the curling seas which followed her, and seemed to just miss breaking over her stern, they were a little uneasy.

"There is no danger from those seas, as long as we can carry all this sail," remarked Charley. "The boat is moving faster than they are, and they can't overtake her."

But it was soon evident that sail would have to be shortened again. The wind was now blowing a gale, and not a sail was visible on the bay. Charley did not care to come to an anchor, for he had noticed a point of land

about a mile ahead, and intended to run under the lea of it, and put in a second reef. So he was about to order Joe to slack the peak halyards, when, without the slightest warning, the *Ghost's* mast went over the side with a tremendous crash, tearing up part of the deck, and very nearly dragging Joe overboard with the halyards, which caught him around the neck.

"Keep cool, boys," cried Charley. "Let go the anchor, and then get hold of the jib, and try to drag it in clear of the wreck."

A few vigorous pulls brought the jib on deck, where it was thrown into the cockpit, and an effort was then made to get the spars alongside, and lash them together. The boys worked hard, but the weight of the mainsail, soaked as it was with water, made their efforts unsuccessful. While they were still working, the sea suddenly swept the wreck away from them, and to their dismay they found that the one rope which had attached it to the boat had parted, and that the mast and mainsail had started on an independent cruise. Harry would have jumped overboard in chase of it, but Charley forbade him, and assured his comrades that the wreck would drift quietly across to the beach, where they could find it after the wind went down.

"And have we got to stay here all day?" exclaimed Harry. "I don't like the notion at all. Why shouldn't we drift down to the beach after the wreck?"

"Because the seas would fill us full of water long before we could get there. I'm not sure, though, but what we can sail there."

"I'd like to know how we can set a sail without a mast?" said Harry.

"Suppose you and Tom take hold of the ends of a rubber blanket, and stand one on each side of the deck, so as to spread the blanket out as wide as possible. Joe could stand between you, and let the blanket blow right against him. If you fellows could hold it, I believe we could run down to the beach in a very little while."

"Come on," exclaimed Harry; "let's try it. I'll get out a blanket, while somebody get's up the anchor."

"And I'll try to get her round before the wind with an

oar," said Charley. "Be ready with the blanket as soon as I give you the word. You must stand up near the bow, about the same place where the mast used to stand. Now, are you ready with that anchor, Tom?"

"Ready, sir."

"Then up with it as quick as you can. Now go forward with that blanket, and the minute I get her head off a little, help her to swing clear round before the wind."

The crew obeyed orders perfectly, and in a very few minutes the *Ghost* was running under a heavy press of India-rubber blanket for the distant beach. She had fully two miles to go, but as she was sailing fast enough to keep out of the way of the sea, there was no doubt that she would cross the bay safely. It took all the strength which Harry and Tom possessed to hold the blanket, while poor Joe, with his back braced against it, had the satisfaction of knowing that if it blew out of the boys' hands it would carry him overboard.

As they approached the shore, having passed the drifting spars on the way, the prospect was not encouraging. The sea was breaking heavily on the low edge of the meadow which lay between the bay and the sand-hills of the beach, and there was no cove into which the boat could be run. There was nothing to be done but to anchor and wait for pleasant weather. Accordingly the blanket was taken in, and the anchor dropped about thirty yards from the shore.

"Now if the anchor holds as it ought to," said Charley, "we are all right."

"And if it doesn't hold," said Harry, "we shall be all wrong. It's going to hold, though, for there's a good sandy bottom here."

"I wish it was a mud bottom," said Charley. "The anchor would hold twice as well in mud. However, I'm not afraid that we shall drift, unless it blows a regular hurricane."

"Now's the time to mend the deck," remarked Tom. "We've got nothing else to do."

"What in the world made that mast go overboard?" asked Joe. "It didn't break, did it?"

"No," answered Charley. "Either something gave way

at the step, or else it was wasn't properly stepped. We ought to have made absolutely sure that we had stepped it right that day we got through Coney Island Creek. We



"UNDER A HEAVY PRESS OF INDIA-RUBBER BLANKET."

weren't careful enough about it, and this is the way we are paid for it"

There were some small pieces of pine board stowed

away in the boat, which Harry had taken along in order to split them up for kindling wood. With the aid of the few tools which the boys had brought with them, they contrived to mend the deck, so that with the help of a piece of canvas and a little white lead it would shed water. An ugly scar remained to show where the mast had torn its way out ; but for all practical purposes the deck was as good as ever.

This work finished, dinner was made ready, and the boys began to think that riding out a gale at anchor was not half so tiresome as they had supposed it would be.

"There are our spars at last," exclaimed Joe. "I had made up my mind that they had missed the way, and had given up looking for us."

"There they are, sure enough," said Charlie, "and a great deal too near us. First thing we know they will drift right down on us." So saying, he sprang forward and seized the cable, with the hope of giving the boat a sheer that would keep her out of the way of the wreck.

He was too late, for the spars drifted against the cable, and their weight, added to that of the boat, was more than the anchor could hold. The *Ghost* began to drift slowly toward the shore. Nothing could be done, and the boys could only wait for the inevitable moment when the boat would strike.

"I told you I was bound to get wet some time to-day," said Joe. "You see I was right."

"Let's be glad that we've nothing worse than a wetting to dread," said Charley. "The water can't be more than three or four feet deep here, and we couldn't drown ourselves if we were to try. Why, it isn't up to my waist," he added, as he measured the depth with an oar. "Come, let's get overboard, and shove these spars out of the way. We may save the boat from going ashore yet."

They all instantly sprang overboard, and tugged manfully at the wreck ; but it was too heavy and unwieldy for them, and they were too near the shore. The *Ghost* struck while they were still in the water, and the sea instantly began to break over her.

"No help for it, boys," said Charley, cheerfully. "We're

shipwrecked, and we must grin and bear it. Hurry up, and let's get these spars out of the way, and perhaps, we can tow the boat off again."

The spars were finally pushed away from the boat, and then the boys tried to get her afloat by hauling at the cable and by putting their backs against her and pushing with all their might. It was all in vain. She was hard and fast on the shore, and could not be moved.

Such things as could be easily taken out of her were carried ashore, to prevent them from getting any wetter than they already were. The mast, with the boom, gaff, and sail attached, was then dragged ashore, and the sail spread out to dry. While this work was in progress, Charley had noticed that the wind was gradually changing its direction, and was evidently about to back to the southwest. Before the afternoon was over it had done so, and as a result, the sea ceased to break on the shore where the *Ghost* was lying, and she was finally got afloat and baled out.

"We're going to have rain before dark," said Charley; "I can feel it in the air. We'd better rig up our cabin and get things on board again, before the rain catches us. If we don't take care, Joe will get wet again."

"No, he won't," replied Joe. "He can't get any wetter than he is. Do you know, boys, I believe I'm getting to be like a sponge. I shouldn't wonder if I weighed two hundred pounds, with all the water that has soaked into me since the cruise began."

The *Ghost*, in the position in which she was now lying, was to a great extent sheltered from the gale by the sand-hills, and it seemed to the boys as if the wind had gone down. So strongly did Harry insist that the gale had blown itself out, that Charley proposed that they should all walk over to the sand-hills, which were not more than an eighth of a mile distant, and settle the question whether the wind had gone down, or was, as he asserted, blowing as hard as ever. So they made their way through the rank beach grass, and climbed the sand-hills. The first blast of wind convinced them that the gale had increased rather than diminished. The sea was a magnificent sight, and the surf was breaking on the beach with a noise like thunder. There were only

two sails visible in the distant horizon, and the sky in the south-west was black with approaching rain. There could be no doubt that a wild and terrible night was at hand, and the boys went back to the boat feeling awed at the might of the elements, and somewhat oppressed by a feeling of loneliness and helplessness.

They had everything in order before the rain reached them, and though it came down in sheets, they managed to keep dry. They were not sleepy, and so they talked over the events of the day as they lay in their narrow but warm and comfortable cabin.

"By the bye, Charley, we haven't heard you say anything about Nina to-day," said Harry, mischievously.

"Who's Nina?" said Charley. "Oh, I remember—the girl we met yesterday. Why, what should I say about her?"

"Oh, nothing; only I was thinking that you'd probably forgotten all about her. Now Joe thinks that it would be a nice thing to get her to come on a cruise with us."

"That's nonsense. She couldn't go without her mother, and her mother wouldn't go without her father. We'd have to get a regular yacht, with state-rooms, and all that. Don't let's talk about girls, Tom. Did you ever see a canoe?"

"I've seen birches, if that's what you mean."

"No; I mean a wooden cruising canoe, such as the fellows that belong to the American Canoe Club have. Do you know that you can sail or paddle anywhere in a canoe, and sleep in it at night? That's the sort of thing to cruise in."

"I've seen one," said Joe. "It was a perfect beauty, all decked over, and with water-tight compartments to carry things in, and two masts. If you'll believe it, the whole thing, masts and all, didn't weigh over seventy pounds."

"Now, if we had canoes," continued Charley, "we could cruise in any kind of water. We could come down a shallow river all full of rapids, or we could sail in deep water, and keep dry in any sort of sea. I'd like nothing better than a canoe cruise, and I wish you'd all think about trying it next summer."

The conversation was successfully turned from girls to

canoes, and the boys discussed canoes and canoeing until they finally fell asleep, with the rain beating heavily on their canvas covering, and rattling like a constant shower of peas on the deck. They had been asleep for several hours when they were suddenly awakened by the heavy report of a cannon, fired apparently but a little distance from them.





CHAPTER VIII.

IS that thunder?" cried Harry, starting up and knocking his head against the canvas.

"No, it's a gun," replied Charley. "There's a vessel in distress somewhere near us."

As he spoke, the gun was fired again.

"That was close by," exclaimed Charley.

"Boys, let's run across to the beach, and see if there's anything to be seen."

It had stopped raining, but the boys were too excited to care whether it rained or not. They hauled up the anchor, pushed the boat ashore with an oar, and made their way rapidly across the meadow to the beach. It was already beginning to grow light, and they could dimly make out the form of a vessel stranded on the bar that lies a few rods distant from the beach.

"There's a wreck, sure enough," said Charley.

"Can't we do anything to help the men?" asked Tom.

"I don't see how we can. If the coast patrol was here, they might do something; but they don't patrol the beach in summer."

"Let's make a fire, anyhow," suggested Tom. "It may encourage them to know there's somebody here, and, besides, it will keep us warm."

"I'll go back and get the matches," said Harry, "if you'll get some wood. The fire may help the poor men to see where the shore is."

While he was gone, the rest hunted eagerly for firewood,

of which they collected a large pile ; and soon a bright fire was blazing on the beach.

"We don't hear the gun any more," said Joe. "That must be because they see us."

"Or else because they can't fire it any more. They must all be in the rigging now, trying to keep from being washed overboard. They probably fired the gun before they struck on the bar," said Charley.

"Will they all be drowned?" asked Tom.

"They will, unless the wind and sea go down very soon," answered Charley. "No vessel can hold together long on that bar in such weather as this."

"There's a light!" exclaimed Joe. "Somebody is coming this way."

The light proved to be carried by one of a party of four men from the mainland, who had heard the guns some time before the boys had heard them, and who had rowed across the bay. They went to one of the coast-patrol houses, which stood in a hollow sheltered by the sandhills, only a rod or two from where the boys had built their fire. The boys followed them, anxious to lend their aid if they could be of any service.

The house was full of ropes, life-buoys, and other apparatus, besides two large boats. Into one of these the men threw coils of rope, cork-jackets, rockets, and a quantity of articles of which the boys knew neither the names nor the uses, and were about to run her out through the open door, when the leader said, "Leave that boat here, and get out that there mortar first. We can come back for the boat if we have to use her."

There was a small mortar in one corner of the room, and the men proceeded to drag it out. Charley spoke to the man who seemed to be in command, and said, "If we can do anything, please let us know."

"You can help drag the mortar, if you want to," replied the patrolman, "and one of you can build a fire in the stove in the next room. Take one of them lanterns, and you'll find wood and shavings alongside the stove."

Tom instantly volunteered to build the fire, although he was very anxious to be on the beach. The other boys

helped as best they could in dragging the mortar, which was soon planted close to the surf and opposite the wreck.

It had now grown so light that they could clearly make her out. She was a large bark. The crew could be seen in her fore rigging, where they had taken refuge. Her masts, with the exception of the foretop-gallant-mast, were still standing ; but as the sea was making a clear breach over her, it was not to be expected she would hold together long.

The mortar was loaded with a shot to which a thin cord was attached. It was hoped that the shot would pass over the vessel, so that the crew could get hold of the cord, and that communication between the wreck and the shore could thus be established. The shot, however, fell short, and a second trial only made it more certain that the mortar would not throw a shot the required distance against the wind.

"It's no good," said the patrolman. "If the Government won't give us a mortar big enough to carry five rods we can't be expected to work miracles. Come on, men, and get out the boat. We'll have her on the beach, though I don't believe we can do much with her."

Everybody went back to the house.

"We'll want all you boys to help this time," said the Captain of the coast-guard, for such he proved to be. "It's hard work, dragging a boat through the sand."

Tom's fire was now blazing nicely, and he left it to lend a hand with the boat. It was hard work until the loose, deep sand at the foot of the sand-hills was passed, after which the boat was moved more easily, until she was finally brought opposite the wreck.

"Now, men," said the Captain, "what do you say? Can we do it?"

"We can try," answered one of the men ; "but I say, wait till daylight. If that bark has held together so long as she has, she'll last an hour longer, and by that time the sea may go down a little ; anyway, we'll have light to work by."

"There are but four of us here," said another man. "I'm ready to launch her whenever Captain Raynor gives the word ; but we ought to have another oar."

"Take me," said Charley. "I can pull an oar, and I've

been drilled in landing through the surf. It's a part of the navy drill now."

"Are you in the navy, young fellow?" asked the Captain.

"Yes, sir," replied Charley.

"You shall come along if we launch the boat. It's no fool's play, though, you understand. Every man that get's into that boat takes his life in his hand."

"I shouldn't offer to go if I didn't think I could do my duty with the rest of you," replied Charley; "and I don't think my life is any more precious than yours. Tell me what oar to pull, and you'll find that I can obey orders."

"We'll be very proud to have you along with us," exclaimed one of the men. "If the rest of the Annapolis boys are like you, they're a good lot."

While they were waiting for daylight, the little party sat down by the remains of the bonfire, and talked about the wrecked vessel.

"She's an Eytalian, or something of that sort, by the looks of her," said the Captain. "Those fellows know about as much about navigation as a canal boatman. Now I'll bet that fellow didn't know where he was within two hundred miles. Do you remember that Frenchman that came ashore down by Fire Island Light three years ago, and thought he was steering all right for to enter Long Island Sound? So he was, if Long Island hadn't happened to be in the way. John, how many men are there in the rigging?—you've got the best eyes of any of us."

"I can count seven," answered the man.

"That ain't crew enough for her," said the Captain. "Some of them have been washed overboard when she struck. There'll be more of the poor chaps overboard before long. Look at that sea! Once it buried her whole hull!"

"She won't stand many such seas," said the man who had been called John.

"What are you boys doing on the beach at this time in the morning?" asked Captain Raynor. "Did you row across the bay?"

Charley told how he and the other boys happened to be in the neighbourhood of the wreck. The men listened

with much interest, and Charley was beginning to wonder how they could be interested in anything but the fate of the unhappy men on board the wreck, when the Captain rose up and said, "Well, there's no use in waiting. The sea isn't going down, and we've got light enough. Now, men, if you're ready, get on your cork-jackets, and we'll launch the boat."

Every one of the boat's crew, including Charley, put on cork life-preservers, and then, shoving the boat close to the surf, waited for the order to launch her. Charley had been told to pull the oar next to the stroke-oar, and, with one of the men, was seated in the boat. The rest of the crew stood with both hands on her gunwale.

The Captain waited until he thought he saw a favourable chance. "Now—away with her!" he cried, and the men, rushing into the surf with the boat, leaped into her, and bent to their oars, while the Captain managed the long steering oar. For a few moments they fought manfully with the waves, and had nearly succeeded in getting through the breakers when a tremendous sea whirled the boat around, rolled her over and over, and flung her violently on the beach. The men, who were, of course, thrown out of her, luckily managed to reach the shore unhurt, and Charley, to the great joy of his friends, was among them. The boat, however, was so seriously damaged that it was out of the question to think of trying to launch her a second time.

"You've had a narrow escape," said the Captain to Charley. "I didn't much think we'd get through the breakers, but we had to try it."

"I'm none the worse for it," said Charley. "But there's another boat in the house. Can't we launch that?"

"She's so heavy that we couldn't haul her down here without a team of horses; and if we had her here, there ain't enough of us to launch her. No, my boy; we've done all we can do. Our only chance now is that we may fish some man out of the surf before he is drowned."

"There goes a fellow up the maintopmast stay, Captain," called out one of the men. "That foremast must be getting shaky."

A sailor was making his way along the maintopmast stay with the agility of a monkey. When he reached the topmast cross-trees he stopped a little while to rest, and then descended the rigging. Those on shore watched him



CAPSIZING OF THE LIFEBOAT.

closely, wondering what could be his object. When he had descended the main rigging as far as he dared to go on account of the seas which were constantly washing over the bark, they saw him lean over and catch the signal halyards,

that were rove through the truck at the royal-masthead. He cut the halyards, unrove them, made them up into a coil, threw it over his shoulder, ascended to the cross-trees, and, sliding down the stay, went into the foretop.

"He's a-going to try to swim ashore," said the Captain.

But such was not the man's intention. He was presently seen to make the end of the signal halyards fast to a billet of wood, which he threw into the sea.

"That fellow's got some sense into him, if he is an Eye-talian," exclaimed Captain Raynor. "He's going to try to send us a line, and I shouldn't wonder if he did it."

They watched closely for the billet of wood, and after a while saw it tossing in the surf. Joining hands the men formed a line, and waded out until the foremost one caught the float, and with the help of the others pulled it ashore.

Not a moment was lost in bending the end of a stout coil of rope to the signal halyards. When this was done, the shipwrecked men all climbed into the foretop, and hauled in the rope, making the end fast around the head of the foremast. The shore end was then carried to the top of the sand-hills, where it was securely anchored, and hauled taut. There was now a strong rope connecting the bark with the shore, and at a good height above the water.

Over this rope the shipwrecked crew made their way to the land. All of them arrived safe, and they were immediately taken to the house, where they warmed themselves by Tom's fire, while patrolmen made hot coffee for them, and then set about getting breakfast.

Not one of the rescued men could speak English, and little beyond the fact that the bark was bound from Genoa to New York could be drawn from them. They were, however, bright, cheerful fellows, and seemed full of gratitude for their escape.

"Now after we've fed these men," said Captain Raynor, "we'll go down to the bay, and help the boys step their mast. Boys, you've got to have some breakfast with us. You've done about as much as we have, and the Government can afford to feed you."

The Captain kept his word, and after breakfast he and two of the men went down to where the *Ghost* was lying,

and stepped the heavy mast. Without their aid the boys would have been in an unpleasant predicament, for they could not step the mast alone, and they did not want to row a heavy sail-boat two miles across the bay. When the *Ghost* was once more ready to set sail, the patrolmen shook hands with the boys, wished them a pleasant voyage, and told them how to steer to avoid the shallows in the south side of the bay, and to reach the mouth of the creek which connects the Great South Bay at Westhampton with Quantuck Bay, which lies further east. The wind had gone down very much since sunrise, and, with a single reef in the mainsail, the *Ghost* displayed her sailing qualities to great advantage.

All that day the *Ghost* was kept on her course, and at the end of the afternoon she was moored to the shore within sight of the Westhampton bridge, and very near the beach. It promised to be a beautiful moonlight night, and had not the boys been tired out they would have kept on and sailed until midnight. They felt, however, that they needed sleep, for they had slept very little the preceding night. So, after a hearty supper, they turned in, and were soon nearly asleep.

"Boys," said Joe, suddenly, "I can't go to sleep. I know I have done wrong."

"What have you done, old fellow?" said Charley, rousing himself. "Let's hear about it."

"I haven't been wet all day," answered Joe, solemnly.

"If you say another word, we'll get up and throw you overboard," exclaimed Harry.

After which there was silence in the cabin of the *Ghost*.





CHAPTER IX.

THE Great South Bay, the eastern half of which is often called Moriches Bay, is separated from Quantuck Bay by a neck of land less than a mile wide. Through this neck a narrow channel was cut many years ago, and the ebb and flow of the tides have scoured it out, until it is now ten or twelve feet deep in many places. The *Ghost*, after passing Sunday at anchor, sailed gaily up the channel on Monday morning, until she was unexpectedly stopped by a bridge, and her crew found themselves again compelled to take the mast out. She was brought close to the side of the bridge, and made fast, for the tide was running rapidly, and the boys went ashore to devise means for unstepping the mast.

"It's going to be hard work," said Charley, "but I think we can do it. We can take the throat halyards and use them for a tackle, and we ought to be able to hoist that mast out."

"Let's try the plan we tried at the Coney Island Bridge," said Joe.

"We had two coloured men to help us then," said Charley, "but they're not here."

"Somebody will be here before long. Look at the road. There's a great deal of travel on it, and if we wait awhile we'll be sure to have some help."

"But we don't want to ask people to help us," urged Charley. "We ought to be able to get along without help."

"If people want to help us, why shouldn't we let them?"

said Harry. "Let's get everything ready for hoisting the mast out, and then if anybody comes along and offers to help us, it would be ridiculous for us to say no."

By the time the halyards were unrove a waggon-load of men on their way to the beach drove up, and stopped to look at the *Ghost*. "You can't get that mast out alone," said one of the men; "we'll just lift it out for you." They did so, and then, after the boat had been brought to the other side of the bridge, they were about to step the mast, when one of them said, "If you boys are going right through to Shinnecock Bay, you'd better not step that mast till you get to the other side of the Quogue bridge."

"Is there another bridge that we've got to go under?" asked Charley.

"There's one on Quogue Neck, about a mile from here, and it won't be worth while for you to try to sail that distance, and then have to get your mast out again."

This was so evident that the boys at once decided to pole across Quantuck Bay. The mast was therefore laid along the deck, and after rowing the *Ghost* through the deep channel into the shallow water of Quantuck Bay, they poled her swiftly towards the entrance of the channel that led to Shinnecock Bay.

It was easy enough to see where the entrance to the channel was, but it was not an easy thing to reach it. The water was so shallow that the boat continually ran aground. A dozen times the boys had to turn back and try a new route, and more than once they had to get overboard to push the boat clear of a sand-bank. It took them nearly four hours to cross a bay that was less than a mile wide, and when they at last reached the entrance to the Shinnecock ditch, it was long after their lunch-time.

"There's another fog coming up," exclaimed Charley, looking toward the south-west. "This is too bad."

"And what makes it worse is that the wind has all died out," remarked Tom.

"We have had all kinds of weather since we started on this cruise," continued Charley. "Now I made sure that after the gale we had yesterday, we should have clear weather for a while."

"Let's get through to Shinnecock Bay, anyhow," said Harry. "We may be able to get as far as the lighthouse before the fog shuts down on us."

The oars were immediately got out, for the water was now too deep for poling, and Tom and Harry rowed the *Ghost* slowly up the ditch. It was literally a ditch, having been lately dug to connect the two bays, between which there had been no water communication for many years. Half way to Shinnecock Bay was the Quogue bridge. Here too the boys met some gentlemen who had been snipe-shooting, and who helped them step the mast. It was not, however, worth while to set the sail, for there was not a breath of air stirring, and so the oars were resumed, and through the thick fog the *Ghost* proceeded into Shinnecock Bay.

"We might as well keep on till six o'clock," said Charley. "If we steer about north-north-east by compass, we will get somewhere. I don't know exactly where, but at any rate we can't go far out of our course. The chart doesn't show any inlet into Shinnecock Bay, so we can't possibly get out to sea."

"The tide is running into the bay, and it was running pretty strong at the bridge. We can drift along with it, and row very easy," said Tom.

"How far down is the lighthouse?" asked Joe.

"Well, it's half way down the bay, so it can't be more than five miles from where we are. We can certainly get there before night."

So the two oarsmen rowed easily onward, without bending their backs enough to tire themselves, and frequently resting altogether and letting the boat drift. Joe grew restless after a time, and threw himself down on his back on the bottom of the boat, and began to sing. This was more than Harry could stand, for Joe's singing reminded every one who heard it of the singing of a cat on the back fence. Harry tried to poke him gently with an oar, but unluckily he hit the compass, knocked it over, and broke it.

"Now we're in a nice fix," exclaimed Charley. "We won't find the lighthouse to-night, and the best thing we can do is to try to find the shore."

"Here's a little cat's-paw," said Tom. Sha'n't we get the sail up?"

"I suppose we might as well. The wind is probably from the south-west, for that is the way it was blowing this morning."



OUT AT SEA.

The sails were set, and as the breeze increased, the *Ghost* began to skim over the water.

"What are we going to do when we reach the east end of Shinnecock Bay?" asked Charley, after a while.

"Why, I suppose," Harry replied, "we'll have to turn round and sail back again."

"Why not get over into Peconic Bay, and come home through the Sound? According to the chart, the two bays are only a mile apart at Canoe Place, and there is a pond half a mile wide lying just in the middle of the neck of land that separates them, so we should only have to make two carries of a quarter of a mile each."

"But how do we know that there isn't a big hill, or something of that kind, in the way?" asked Harry.

"The reason why it is called Canoe Place must be that the Indians used to carry their canoes across from one bay to the other. Now if canoes can be carried across, the road can't be very hilly. The chances are that we should find nothing worse than a level meadow, and if we could get a team of horses, I believe we could get the *Ghost* into Peconic Bay."

"It strikes me," interrupted Joe, "that we'd better find out where we are now before we lay plans for what we're going to do next week. We may sail round in this fog and never find the shore for three or four days. This must be a pretty big bay, for there's a regular long swell here."

"Oh, nonsense, Joe! we'll come to land in a few minutes now," replied Charley.

"You were not with us the time we were lost in a fog on Brandt Lake. That's a little bit of a lake, but we rowed nearly all night before we struck the shore."

"Never mind about that now, Joe," said Tom. "We want to talk about Charley's plan for getting into the Sound. I'm in favour of it if it can be done, for it would be a great deal better than sailing back over the same ground twice."

"Same water, you mean," suggested Joe.

"Of course I do. Boats don't sail on the land, do they? Hullo! here is a young squall."

"And a very lively one it is. I wish it would blow the fog away," exclaimed Charley.

"It's getting chilly," said Harry. "I should like to get ashore and build a good fire."

"What do you say about going home through the Sound, Harry?" asked Charley.

"I say let's do it, by all means, if we can."

"What do you say, Joe?"

"The Sound can't be any wetter than the South Bay, so I'm in favour of trying it," replied Joe.

"Then we'll consider it settled that we sail to the end of Shinnecock Bay, and then go to Canoe Place and cross over to Peconic Bay. Slack those peak halyards a little, will you, Tom? If this squall lasts, we shall have to put in a reef."

The wind was now blowing so fresh that in almost any other circumstances the young Captain would have reefed the mainsail, but he was in constant expectation of reaching the shore. The long swell which gently rocked the boat was very unlike the short swells of the Great South Bay.

"There's something very strange about this," said Charley. "We must have sailed at least ten miles, and the bay is only ten miles long. Why haven't we struck the shore?"

"How long ago was the chart made?" inquired Tom.

"I've had it—or rather father has had it—over three years," said Harry.

"An inlet may have opened into Shinnecock Bay since that chart was made," said Tom. "New inlets do open into these bays in winter storms, for I've read of such things in the newspaper."

"Try if you can touch bottom with an oar. I'm pretty sure you can't," said Charley.

Tom tried, but could find no bottom.

"Then, boys, we'll haul down the mainsail and jib, and let her drift for a while."

The *Ghost* came up in the wind, and the sails were dropped and furled.

"Now," resumed Charley, "I want you to keep cool, and not to let yourselves get frightened. The truth is, boys, that we are out at sea."

"But we can't be," cried Harry. "There isn't any inlet."

"There must be an inlet," Charley replied, "and we've drifted out through it. This swell is the swell of the Atlantic. It's impossible to have anything like it in a little shallow bay."

"What shall we do?" asked the boys, all together.

"We can't do anything till the fog lifts, and we find out where we are. The compass is gone, we don't know which way the wind is, and we can't even hear the surf. The only thing to do is to wait for clear weather."

While they were talking, the sea had begun to break into white caps, and Charley ordered the mainsail to be set close reefed. "If we don't get some sail on her," he explained, "we shall have the water coming aboard."

"But we may be running further away from the land all the time," said Harry.

"Very likely; but we can't help ourselves, for we must keep steerage-way on her, and keep her from getting swamped. We'll sail as close to the wind as we can. If the wind is south-west, and if we keep it on our port bow, we shall be drifting in toward the shore, and if it's blowing from some other direction, we sha'n't be making headway enough to do much harm."

"You know best," said Tom. "We'll do as you say."

"I would give almost anything," continued Charley, "if the fog would only lift. However, the wind must blow it away."

"We must have gone out of the inlet when we were letting her drift with the tide; but why we didn't notice it I can't understand," remarked Harry.

"There was no wind at the time, and we were busy talking," said Charley. "Come to think of it, we never noticed that we couldn't hear the surf until just now. I remember hearing it when we were in the ditch, but I haven't the least idea when we lost the sound of it."

"The fog is breaking," cried Joe. "It's clear overhead."

"And the wind is rising fast," added Charley, "and the sea is getting up. In another half-hour we shan't dare to keep the mainsail on her, for there will be too much of it, even though it is close reefed."

Joe and Charley were both right. The fog was growing thinner, and the wind was rising, but the wind rose even faster than Charley had predicted. In the course of the next twenty minutes it was blowing so hard that it was no longer safe for the *Ghost* to carry her mainsail. Charley

ordered it to be hauled down, the jib to be set, and the boat to be put before the wind. The moment the jib filled, the *Ghost* started away like a runaway horse, but whether she was heading for the beach or for the Bermuda Islands it was impossible to guess. For another half-hour the fog hung around them, and then all at once it vanished like a curtain that is suddenly drawn up. The boys eagerly looked in every direction for land. None was visible except in the north-west, where the low grey line of Long Island, and the slender tower of a lighthouse, could be faintly seen at a distance of at least twelve miles. The wind blew directly from the land, and the impossibility of beating back to the shore was manifest.





CHAPTER X.

GET out the hammer and nails, and take a couple of the bottom boards and nail the canvas over the cockpit," ordered Charley. "We must keep the water out, or we shall get into trouble."

The boys silently obeyed him. The canvas cabin was laid across the cockpit; the boards were placed over the edges of the canvas and nailed down to the deck. An opening was left close to the tiller, so that any one could creep into the cockpit, but with the aid of a cord even this small opening could be closed.

"Now, boys," said Charley, when this work was done, "I want Tom and Harry to go below and go to sleep. We are in no danger just at present, but we may have hard work before us, and we can't afford to have everybody fagged out at the same time. Joe will stay here with me in case I want him to help me. So go below, the port watch, and sleep while you can."

"Do you think we shall be drowned?" Harry whispered to Tom, as he prepared to follow him into the cabin.

"I hope we shall come through all right," replied Charley. "With that canvas over her cockpit, the boat ought to live through a pretty heavy gale. Keep up your courage. The wind may blow itself out in a little while. Anyway, we'll do our duty like men, and leave it to God to take care of us. By the bye, how are we off for water and provisions?"

"The water-keg is full, for we filled it this morning, and

we've provisions enough for three or four days, if we don't eat much."

"That's all right, then; but mind and don't drink a drop of water while you can get along without it."

Harry disappeared below the canvas, and Charley, after lacing up the opening, took two pieces of rope, one of which he passed around his waist and made it fast to the rudder-head, and the other of which he handed to Joe, and told him to lash himself to a ring-bolt in the deck. "Now, Joe," he said, "we're safe and comfortable."

"And I'm going to get wet again," replied Joe.

The two boys sat quietly munching the biscuits that Harry had passed up to them when he went below, and which were all the dinner they cared to eat. As night came on, the weather grew decidedly worse. The *Ghost* fairly flew before the wind, and Charley was compelled to abandon the tiller, and to steer with an oar. Luckily he had placed a socket for a rowlock at the stern of the boat when he lengthened her, and this enabled him to use a steering oar now that the *Ghost* kept pitching her rudder almost out of the water, and frequently refused to answer the helm. She rolled a good deal, and occasionally a shower of spray would fly over the stern, drenching Charley and Joe. Neither of them felt much like talking. Charley's whole attention was given to the work of steering, for the least carelessness or mistake might have led to the instant swamping of the boat, and Joe was too much occupied with thinking of the dangerous position they were all in. The *Ghost* was certainly in an alarming situation. She was hurrying further and further out to sea, in a storm that would have tried even a staunch sea-going yacht. So far from showing any signs of improvement, the weather was constantly growing worse. The sea was heavy, and rolled after the boat as if it was about to pour over her stern, and beat her down into the depths of the ocean. At about ten o'clock Charley saw plainly that the danger was very great in continuing to scud before the wind. Had the *Ghost* been able to carry the close-reefed mainsail, she could have lain-to with perfect safety; but he had already found that she could not bear that amount of sail. More

than once the sea swirled up around her stern, and buried the after-part of the overhang. Should a rough sea fairly come on board over the stern, the *Ghost* would fill and sink in a moment.

"Call the other fellows, Joe," said Charley.

Tom and Harry did not wait to be called, for they were wide awake, having been far too nervous to sleep. They instantly crept out of the cabin, and stood hanging on to the mainboom, which was lashed amidships.

"We can't scud much longer," Charley said, in his cheerful voice, "and we must try to make a drag. Get out your knives, and cut the gaff loose from the sail; but mind you don't let the sail get adrift. Joe, you find one of the rubber blankets and a lot of that heavy blue-fish line."

When the gaff was cut loose, and the mainsail made snug around the boom, Charley ordered the spare oar to be lashed at right angles across the middle of the gaff. He then showed the boys how to lash the india-rubber blanket over this frame-work, so that when finished it resembled an enormous black kite. Next the cannon was lashed firmly to one end of the gaff, and finally the cable was cut loose from the anchor, passed through a hole in the middle of the blanket, and made fast to the gaff and the oar just where they crossed each other.

"Now, boys, what I'm going to do is this," said Charley, when the drag was finished. "I'm going to try to bring her head up to the wind, and let her ride, with the drag as a sea-anchor. The danger will be when she gets broadside to the sea, but it will only last a minute or two. It will be a very ticklish minute; but if she lives through it, we shall probably ride the gale out safely."

"Have we got to try it?" asked Tom.

"It is the only thing we can do. If we keep on scudding we are certain to be swamped; but if she doesn't ship any heavy sea while the drag is bringing her up we shall be pretty safe."

"Then we'll do it," said Tom; "and I suppose the sooner we do it the better."

"All right," returned Charley. "Take the halyards and take a turn around your waists, so that you won't get

washed overboard. Now, when I give the word heave the drag overboard and stand clear of the cable, for it may catch you by the legs. Are you all ready?"

"Ready," answered Tom and Harry.

"Then haul down the jib, Joe, just as quick as possible, and the minute it's down hang on to the mast as tight as you can. Heave away that drag."

The drag was overboard just as the jib came down. The cable ran out swiftly, and the moment the boat felt the strain of the drag, she began to swing around towards the wind. Charley helped her with his oar, working at it with frantic energy. A kind Providence befriended them, and during the long minute—which seemed at least five minutes to the anxious boys—while the *Ghost* was in the trough of the sea, hardly a drop of water came aboard her. The danger was over when the boat's bow was presented to the gale, and Charley, ceasing his efforts with the oar, exclaimed, in a reverent tone, "Thank God!" and then called the boys to come into the cockpit and make themselves comfortable.

"As long as the cable holds, and the drag doesn't break up, we are as safe as if we were ashore," said he, gaily.

Taking in the now useless oar, and lashing the helm amidships, Charley crept into the cockpit, where his companions joined him. They got out a box of sardines, and with the remains of a loaf of bread, they made a comfortable supper. The spray occasionally flew over the bow, and slapped the canvas, but the cockpit remained perfectly dry.

"What do you think about the drag? Is it going to hold together?" asked Tom, when the supper had made him feel a little more comfortable, and the gale seemed to his imagination less terribly dangerous.

"It's well made, and the only danger about it is that the oar may break. Even if it does, the weight of the cannon will keep the gaff perpendicular, and there will be quite enough of the drag left to keep us head to the sea. The cable is strong, and I don't believe we are pulling hard enough on it to snap it. I think we can feel perfectly easy, and I'm going to turn in and have a good sleep.

Tom, will you keep your head out of the cabin, and keep your eyes open for the next two hours, and then call Harry to relieve you? We must have somebody on the lookout."

"Don't we need a light, too?" asked Tom.

"Of course we do. Will that lantern of yours burn in this wind, Harry?"

"It ought to. It's warranted to burn in any weather—at least that's what the advertisement says."

"Then light it, and hang it up alongside of the mast. You'll have to lash it to the mast, or it will swing round and smash against it. Call me if you see a ship's light anywhere, or if the weather gets worse, or anything happens. Come on, Joe; let's have four hours of good sleep, and we shall turn out in first-rate spirits."

So saying, the young Captain wrapped himself in his blanket, and was asleep long before Joe yielded to weariness, rather than sleepiness, and sank into an uneasy slumber.

When Charley was called, four hours later, by Harry, he found that there was little change in the weather. The wind was still howling as fiercely as ever, and the sea was at least as heavy as it had been, although the effect of the drag was to break theseas that were sweeping down on the *Ghost*, so that she really felt them rather less than she had when running before the wind. Charley refilled the lantern, which had nearly burned out, examined the cable and the ring-bolt to which it was fastened to see if he could find any signs of weakness, and then, going aft, sat down and thought over the situation. He felt confident that the gale, which had come up so suddenly and fiercely, would blow itself out in the course of the next twelve hours, and he had little doubt that the boat would live through it. But the morning would certainly find the *Ghost* far out of sight of land, without a compass, and with only a small supply of food and water. If the sky should be clear, he could judge of the points of the compass by the sun; but it would be impossible to get the gaff on board again, and without it the boat would hardly be able to beat to windward in case the direction of the wind should not change. There was, however, a good chance that some vessel bound to New York would pick the boys

up, and perhaps tow in the *Ghost*. While he felt that the danger of foundering was probably over, Charley could not conceal from himself that the situation was not a very encouraging one, but he never thought of losing his courage ; and though he felt the responsibility of his position as the one to whom his young comrades looked for counsel and orders, he was calm and cheerful, for he knew that he was doing his duty to the best of his ability.

He did not call Joe, when the latter's turn came to come on deck, for he was anxious to see the sun rise, and he knew that Joe needed sleep.

The sun rose just where he had supposed it would, and a short time afterwards the wind perceptibly lessened its violence. At six o'clock he called the other boys, and told them the welcome news that the gale had broken, and that fair weather could not be far off.

"Where does all this water come from?" demanded Harry, as he awoke to find that he was lying in a pool of water. "Did we ship a sea last night after I went to sleep?"

"She may be leaking a little," replied Charley. "Pump her out, somebody, and we'll soon find out if she leaks."

Tom pumped for ten or twelve minutes, and freed the *Ghost* of water ; but before breakfast was over, the water again made its appearance.

"She's sprung a leak, sure enough," said Harry.

"The pump throws the water out faster than it comes in," replied Charley, "and that kind of a leak will never sink her. She has strained a little in this sea, but I don't think she will leak any worse than she is leaking now."

But the leak was a more serious matter than the boys supposed that it was. It increased slowly but surely, and by ten o'clock it became necessary to pump the boat out every half hour.

"Don't be worried about it," Charley said to Joe, who was becoming alarmed at the rapidity with which the water flowed into the *Ghost*. "If the pump won't keep her free, we can all get to work and bale. A boat that four fellows and a pump couldn't keep afloat would be worse than a sieve."

Still, the leak was not a pleasant thing, and Charley was not quite so careless about it as he seemed to be.

Both the wind and sea had now gone down very decidedly, and the boys were hoping that before long they would be able to set the mainsail. It is true that they had no gaff, but by hooking the throat halyards into the corner of the sail, it could be converted into a rude leg-of-mutton sail, with the peak dangling and flapping in the air. Toward noon a two-masted vessel came in sight, directly to leeward of them, though too far off for them to make out her rig. They watched her carefully for an hour, and could not see that her position changed in the least, except that the distance between her and the *Ghost* was diminishing.

"Boys," said Charley, "I think we can venture to cut loose from the drag, and run down to that vessel under the jib. I think I can make out her jib-boom now, and if I'm not mistaken she's steering westerly. Very likely we can get her captain to lend us a compass, or perhaps he can give us something that will do for a gaff."

"And have we got to abandon our own gaff, and the cannon, and the rubber blanket?" inquired Harry.

"There is too much sea for us to run the risk of trying to get them on board again," answered Charley. "I'm sorry to lose the cannon, for it did us good service in Hempstead Bay, but we shall never see it again. Run up the jib, Joe; and, Tom, you get hold of the cable and walk aft with it, so as to give the boat a sheer to port. We want to be quick about it, and Joe must have the hatchet ready to cut the cable the moment the jib fills."

The manœuvre was successfully accomplished, and the *Ghost* ran down toward the strange vessel. As she neared the stranger, the latter proved to be a deserted brig. Her sails were all furled except the maintopsail, which had blown out of the bolt-ropes, and she was evidently water-logged, for she was very low in the water, and occasionally a wave seemed to wash clear over her, as she rolled in the trough of the sea.

"We've wasted our time," cried Tom. "She's worse off than we are."

"That may be," said Charley, "but I think we had better try to get on board of her. She isn't going to sink, for she must have had all the water in her that she



BOARDING THE WATER-LOGGED BRIG.

will hold a long while ago. Let's board her anyhow, and see if we can get a compass."

It was a delicate matter to board the brig with the sea

that was still running. The *Ghost* was brought around her stern, and near enough to her main-chains for Tom to leap into them with a rope in his hand, while Charley, using an oar as a fender, prevented the brig and the boat from coming together. The rope, which was the peak halyard, used as a painter, was made fast to the brig, and then the *Ghost* was carefully hauled up, until Harry was near enough to jump. The same process was repeated until the other two boys had joined Tom and Harry, and then the *Ghost* was permitted to drift away as far as her painter would let her. Climbing into the main-rigging, so as to be out of the reach of the water, the boys remained long enough to see that the seas which came on board the brig were not heavy enough to be dangerous. She was, apparently, a French vessel, and Charley thought that she was probably loaded with timber. The quarter-deck was dry, except for the spray which now and then flew over it, and the boys felt no fear in coming down from the rigging, and looking into the binnacle to see if the compass was still there. The moment Charley saw the compass he cried out, "Boys, the wind has changed, and is very nearly south-east. What do you say to sailing the brig into New York, and getting a pile of salvage money?"

"Will she sail?" asked Tom.

"Can we sail her?" asked Harry.

"She's awfully wet," remarked Joe.

"I think we can sail her into port if the wind holds, and her steering gear is all right, as it looks to be. I say let's try it. We can tow the *Ghost*, and she will be always ready for us if we want to abandon the brig."

"Don't let's decide in a hurry," said Tom. "It will be slow work getting this water-logged vessel into New York, and I don't believe we have fresh water enough to last us more than two days longer."

"There's a water cask on deck right in plain sight," exclaimed Charley. "I can see from here that the bung is in, so it must have fresh water in it. Hold on till I try the wheel. There! I told you so. The rudder and steering gear are all right. Now if you'll agree to try what we can do with the brig, I'll jump up and loose the foretopsail, and

we'll have it set in a jiffy. Come, now, it's a splendid chance for us, and we ought not to lose it."

"Go ahead, Charley," cried the boys, catching their leader's enthusiasm. "Give us our orders, and we'll sail the brig in if we can do it."

"Then come forward with me, and we'll set the headsails, and get her out of the trough of the sea."





CHAPTER XI.

CHARLEY, leaving his companions near the fore-rigging, went out and loosed the jib and flying-jib, and when this was done, returned and showed them where the halyards were. The flying-jib was hoisted without much difficulty, but the jib was heavier, and the boys found it necessary to take the halyards to a "gypsy," which is something like a small windlass, with the aid of which the obstinate sail was soon hoisted. The sheets were then trimmed flat, and the pressure of the wind on the sails forced the brig's head round so that she no longer lay with her broadside to the wind and sea. The foretopmast staysail had evidently been set during the gale, for it had been blown away, and nothing remained of it but a few shreds clinging to the bolt-ropes.

Charley next went aloft and loosed the foretopsail. The brig was an old-fashioned affair, and had the old-fashioned single topsails, so the sail was rather a large one for four boys to handle. They, however, succeeded in sheeting it home, and then, with the help of the "gypsy," managed to hoist the yard. All the yards had been squared before the brig was abandoned, and she had swung around so far that the topsail filled, after a fashion, as soon as it was set. Sending Joe aft to the wheel, and telling him to keep the brig directly before the wind, Charley again went aloft and loosed the fore-top-gallant-sail, which was small enough to be sheeted home and hoisted up by Charley, Tom, and Harry, without Joe's help. With the help of these two sails, the

vessel began to move slowly through the water. Her rate of speed was certainly not very great, but it was sufficient to give steerage way to her—at least, so Charley thought. But as the brig showed a great unwillingness to keep on her course, and acted very much like a drunken man who staggers from one side of the pavement to the other, he went aft to see what was the matter.

"I'm glad you've come," said Joe. "I'm afraid I don't exactly understand steering with the wheel. Which way do you turn it if you want her head to turn starboard?"

"You roll the wheel over to starboard, and that ports the helm," replied Charley.

"Then I've been doing just the opposite," exclaimed Joe, "and that's the reason why I couldn't do anything with her. It's lucky I found out what was the matter before any harm was done."

"I'll come back presently," said Charley, "and give you a lesson in steering. I must go now and try to get the foresail on her."

The foresail was set after a long struggle. The breeze was now very light, but the three squaresails drew well, and the brig was certainly making a full knot an hour. The jib and flying-jib were of course of no use now that the vessel was directly before the wind, but Charley decided to let them alone, as they were doing no harm, and as a slight change in the direction of the wind would bring them into use again. The boys were now so tired that they decided to rest and have something to eat before resuming work.

A search for provisions did not prove very successful. There was a lot of dried cod-fish in a box in the maintop, where nobody but Charley would have dreamed of looking for it, and there was salt beef of very uninviting appearance in the harness-cask near the foremast. In the galley were a few biscuits, which did not appear to have been spoiled by sea-water, but there was nothing else to eat on board the vessel. Below the deck the brig seemed to be nearly full of water—so full, at least, that there was no possibility of going below. As nobody was anxious to eat dried cod-fish or raw salt beef, Harry said he would go on board the *Ghost* and

bring a supply of provisions that would give the boys a comfortable lunch.

He went to the main-chains, to which the rope that held the *Ghost* had been made fast, but to his surprise it was not there. Thinking that he had made a mistake, and looked on the wrong side of the vessel, he turned to cross the deck. As he did so, he uttered a cry that startled his companions. "The *Ghost* has gone!" he cried. "There she is, a mile astern." She had not been fastened securely, and had gone adrift while the boys were making sail.

"We must turn right back and get her," exclaimed Harry. "Don't let's lose a minute's time."

"Can we go back after her?" asked Tom.

Charley thought a moment, and answered, "We can't. That is, I don't think it's possible."

"Why not?" asked Harry.

"We'll try it; but there's very little wind, and I don't believe we can beat to windward with this water-logged craft, especially as she hasn't any maintopsail. Run forward, boys, and let go the fore-top-gallant halyards, and then try to haul up the foresail. I'll have to come, though, and show you where the ropes are."

The foresail was brailed up, and the head-sheets were let go, and then Charley ran aloft as quick as he could, and loosed the main-top-gallant sail, which the boys set as well as they could with the topsail-yard down on the cap. They then set the spanker, and hoisted the maintopmast staysail.

"Now come with me," said Charley, "and we'll see if we can brace the head-yards up." They hauled at the port fore-brace with all their might, but found they could only swing the yard a short distance. "It's perfectly hopeless, boys," said Charley. "We can't do it."

"Can't we take the rope to the gypsy or the capstan?" said Harry. "I'm sure we could get the yard round then."

"Perhaps we could," answered Charley, "but we could never tack the brig in that way. It would take us an hour every time, and then it would be of no use. We must give the *Ghost* up, for it's an absolute impossibility for us to work this vessel two miles to windward, and we are at least two miles from the *Ghost* now. However, we'll brace the yards

up a little, and steer her a little more north. All the sails will draw then, and we'll get on a little faster."

With infinite labour the yards were braced up by taking



SETTING SAIL ON THE BRIG.

all the lower and topsail braces to the capstan. The fore-top-gallant yard was once more hoisted, and the foresail set. Joe was told to keep her N.N.W., and with all the sails

drawing, she really made a visible wake in the water. The *Ghost* gradually faded from sight, until she completely vanished.

Harry went aloft to the maintop, and brought down a cod-fish, on which the boys made what was either a late dinner or an early supper. They were so hungry that it did not taste bad, and they agreed that there might be worse than dried cod-fish eaten raw. Charley hurried through with his meal, for he was anxious to make preparations for the night. He found that there was oil enough in the brig's lamps to burn during one night, and he trimmed them and made them ready for lighting. He went aloft to the main-royal-yard and looked for land, but he could see none, and there was not a sail in sight, except two that were dimly visible on the far horizon. Then he came down, and finding that he had some matches in his pocket, he took a big knife that he found in the galley, split up a shelf, and started a fire, with which he meant to boil a piece of beef. The decks had been quite dry ever since the brig had been got before the wind, and the sea was going down every hour. There was nothing more that the young Captain could do for the safety of the vessel which had so strangely come under his command.

As he went aft to where the boys were gathered around the wheel, Tom said to him, "Charley, I know it is my fault that we lost the boat. I thought I had made her fast, so that it was impossible for her to get away, but I hadn't."

"I am the one that is most to blame," replied Charley. "I induced you all to stay on the brig, instead of taking the compass and going about our business. But there's no use in worrying ourselves about what can't be helped."

"Do you really think, now, that we can get her into port?" demanded Harry.

"I think it depends entirely on the wind. If the wind continues to be fair, and especially if it freshens a little, I believe we can't help getting her as far as Sandy Hook, or somewhere within hail of a steam-tug. We can't be more than thirty or thirty-five miles from land, and as soon as we get a little nearer the coast we shall be right in the track of the European steamships."

"Is there any danger of her sinking?" asked Tom.

"Not for a long while yet. We ought to keep a signal of distress flying, though, for I'd like to have some vessel lend us two or three men to help us work her. Look in that locker aft of the wheel, Tom, and see if there isn't an ensign in it."

Tom looked as directed, and found a French flag.

"Now I'd like to know," said Charley, in a disgusted tone of voice, "how we can set a French ensign upside down. It's a sign of distress to set our ensign union down, but this thing hasn't any union. We'll have to hoist it half-way up, and I suppose that will look mournful enough to attract anybody's attention. What I'm afraid of," continued Charley, "is that the wind will change and come out ahead. It's very light, and it keeps shifting back and forth three or four points, as if it didn't know its own mind. However, if we do have a head wind, somebody will take us off the brig, and carry us to New York."

"I'm not complaining, I want you to understand," remarked Joe. "I'm perfectly dry, and I never complain unless I'm wet. But if I'm to do all the steering, I'd like to know it beforehand."

"I beg your pardon, Joe," exclaimed Charley. "I forgot that you've been at the wheel nearly four hours. Tom, will you take the wheel, while I hoist the ensign and attend to a few other little things?"

Tom took the wheel, and Joe explained to him the difference between steering with a wheel and steering with a tiller. After setting the ensign, Charley went forward and lighted the side-lights. Then he put a piece of beef in the kettle to boil, and split up the cook's bench with which to replenish the fire. Finally he coiled all the halyards down on deck, so that there would be no trouble in letting them go in a hurry, and then he rejoined his companions.

"We have had no regular watches to-day," he remarked, "for we had to have all hands on deck to make sail. It's now nearly eight o'clock, and as everything seems all right, Joe and I will turn in till twelve o'clock. You will steer, Tom, while Harry will go forward and keep a look out. Do you know how to strike the hours on the bell?"

"I learned that long ago," replied Tom.

"Then take my watch, and strike the bell every half-hour. Harry, when you hear four bells, come aft and take the wheel, and let Tom go on the look-out. By the bye, I forgot about the binnacle lamp."

There proved to be plenty of oil in it, and it was soon trimmed and lighted. Charley noticed that the brig was heading nearly west.

"The wind is getting round," he said, rather gloomily, "and I'm afraid we shall have it back in the north-west again. Boys, we've got to brace the yards up before any one turns in."

This time the yards were braced up as sharp as the boys could brace them, and a full hour was consumed in this hard labour. It was now possible to keep the brig nearly on her course; but knowing that the wind would probably go still further around, Charley told Tom not to trouble himself about the compass, but to keep her as close to the wind as possible, and to call him in case the wind should get into the north-west. At nine o'clock Charley and Joe went into the galley, and, lying down near the fire, went to sleep.

At twelve o'clock the starboard watch was called. The wind was now unmistakably ahead, and the brig was heading nearly south-west. Tom explained that he had been able to keep her heading nearly west until about half-past eleven, and that he had not thought it worth while to deprive Charley of half an hour of sleep by calling him before twelve. Charley thanked him, but gently reminded him that he had been ordered to call the Captain the moment the wind got into the north-west, and that it was his duty to obey orders strictly.

"I shall want you and Harry to help brail up the top-gallant sails," said Charley. "As long as we can't keep our course, we don't want to carry any more sail than is necessary. We'll haul down the flying-jib and haul up the top-gallant sails, but we won't try to furl them till daylight."

The top-gallant yards were dropped and squared, and the sails braild up. Charley went out and furled the flying-jib, and then Tom and Harry went into the galley to sleep.

Joe took his station on the forecastle, where he walked up and down to keep himself awake, and Charley was left alone at the wheel.

The more he thought the matter over, the more he was convinced that he had not been rash in undertaking to navigate the brig. Had the wind continued fair the boys could almost certainly have brought her near enough to Sandy Hook to meet a steam-tug. Could they have succeeded in this, they would have made a large sum of money, perhaps as much as eight or ten thousand dollars, and Charley himself would have gained a great deal of credit in the eyes of his naval superiors. The brig, water-logged as she was, seemed to be about as safe as the leaky *Ghost*, and there was much more chance that the brig would be seen by some passing vessel, and her crew taken off, than there was that so small a boat as the *Ghost* would meet with help. Unfortunately, the change in the wind had made it apparently impossible for the boys to bring the brig into port; but Charley felt sure that in the course of the next day they would be taken off in case they wanted to abandon her. So finding that his conscience acquitted him of having rashly led his companions into danger, he felt peaceful and happy, and steered the brig as cheerfully as if he were steering the *Ghost* in the Great South Bay.





CHAPTER XII.

THE morning dawned bright and clear. What little wind there was blew steadily from the north-west, and there was not the least reason to suppose that it would change during the day. The boys breakfasted on cold boiled beef, sitting on the deck near the wheel, so that they could breakfast together. It was not a very delightful breakfast, but it was better than raw cod-fish, and a great deal better than no breakfast at all.

As the foretopsail and spanker were enough to give steerage-way to the brig, Charley ordered the foresail to be hauled up and the jib taken in immediately after breakfast. He told his comrades that all hope of getting the vessel into port must now be abandoned, and that they must keep the brig from drifting any further to the southward than could be helped.

"Those sails ought to be furled," said Charley, as he came in from furling the jib, "but I can't roll them up alone. Who will come aloft with me and furl the maintop-gallant-sail?"

Joe was at the wheel, and both Harry and Tom at once volunteered to help their Captain. They found it easy enough to climb the rigging—and indeed Harry had already been up to the maintop—but when they came to lie out on the top-gallant-yard, they found it a very ticklish task. The foot-rope had an unpleasant way of sagging under their weight, and seemed to them to afford a very insecure foothold. At first they could do little except hang on to the

yard, but presently their nervousness wore off, and they found themselves rolling up the sail and passing the gaskets, under Charley's direction, with a confidence that surprised them. "When you once get used to it," said Charley, "you will find that going aloft isn't half so risky as climbing trees. Here you always have a rope to hang on to, and you can be sure that it won't break; but when you are up in a tall tree you never can tell when a branch is going to break and let you down, or when your feet will slip on the bark."

After the maintop-gallant-sail was furled, the boys furled the foretop-gallant-sail with much more ease, and descended to the deck quite proud of their exploit. The foresail was too heavy for them to handle, so the buntlines and leech-lines were hauled as taut as possible, and the sail was left to hang in the brails. The brig was now under her foretop-sail and spanker, and steered so easily that Joe had little hard work to do. The sea had become so smooth that not even a particle of spray sprinkled the low deck of the vessel, and the boys began to find the time hang rather heavily on their hands as they watched for some friendly sail to come and rescue them.

"I wonder where the *Ghost* is?" said Harry.

"Sunk by this time," replied Tom. "You know how she was leaking, and with no one to pump her out she wouldn't keep afloat twenty-four hours."

"I meant to stop that leak," remarked Charley. "I think I know about where it was, and when the sea went down we could probably have got at it. What a nice boat she was!"

"How we shall hate to tell Uncle John that we've lost her!" Harry exclaimed. "I know she cost him a good deal, and it's pretty hard that he should lose all the money he has put into her."

"We can't ask him to buy any more boats for us," said Tom. "I was expecting that we could sell the *Ghost* for money enough to get us all canoes, but now we'll have to give the canoe plan up."

"The fact is," said Joe, "this hasn't been the most successful cruise in the world. We've been out only about ten days, and now we're expecting to be taken home like

shipwrecked sailors, with the loss of everything but our clothes."

"If we only get back safe we needn't worry about anything," replied Tom. "Suppose no vessel comes to help us! The brig will sink some of these days, and I'm thinking that it won't be very long before she makes up her mind to try it."

"Then we can make a raft," said Charley, cheerfully, "and cruise on that until we are picked up. I am almost willing to promise you that we are taken off this brig some time to-day. By the bye, did I tell you that I found out what her name is?"

"How did you find it out?" asked Harry. "You know it is washed off the stern, so that we couldn't make it out."

"Why," Charley replied, "I looked in the forecastle bell yesterday afternoon, and there it was, the *Hirondelle*, of Bordeaux. I forgot to tell you of it at the time. How she comes to be here with a load of timber is something I can't make out."

"There's a sail!" exclaimed Harry.

"Where?" cried Charley.

"Way over on our starboard quarter. I can just see her."

Charley immediately ran aloft and looked anxiously at the distant stranger. He came down and reported that she was apparently a schooner, and seemed to be steering directly toward the brig.

"Do you think they see us?" asked Tom.

"They see our spars, but they can't see our signal of distress, and unless they do see it they won't pay any attention to us. However, they'll be up with us in the course of two or three hours, unless the schooner changes her course, which she probably won't do."

The boys watched the schooner with the utmost interest for a long time, but she seemed to them hardly to move. Joe got tired of watching, and exclaimed, "There's no use in looking at her; a watched schooner never boils."

"How could a schooner boil?" inquired matter-of-fact Tom.

"I have something to amuse you, boys," interrupted Charley. "Let's try to get the brig before the wind, and run down to the schooner. Come forward with me, and



"HURRAH! THERE'S THE 'GHOST.'"

we'll hoist the head-sails. Tom, you and Harry lower the spanker while I go and loose the sails."

Charley went forward and loosed the jib and flying-jib,

and, by the time this was done, Harry and Tom had succeeded in taking in the spanker and had come to help him. When the jib and flying-jib were set, Charley ordered Joe to put the helm hard up. As the brig slowly fell off, he slacked the lee forebrace and foretopsail-brace, and then with Harry and Tom hauled in the weather-braces, until the unassisted strength of the three boys could no longer stir the heavy yards. Then, letting go the head-sheets, they hurried aft and hoisted the spanker. By this time the brig had swung nearly around, and by taking the braces to the capstan the yards were finally braced up, and the wind brought on the port beam. The *Hirondelle* was no longer running away from the schooner, and it was evident that the crew of the latter would understand that the brig wanted to meet them. As the wind was now fair, Charley proceeded to get the foretopgallant-sail on her, and kept his crew so busy that they were surprised to find, when their work was over, that the schooner was only about a mile distant.

"Hurrah! There's the *Ghost*!" Harry suddenly cried. "The schooner is towing her."

Sure enough the little *Ghost* was there, in the wake of the schooner. There could be no mistake about it, for when she pitched the boys could distinctly see the canvas cabin.

Charley ran forward and let go the top-gallant and top-sail halyards, and slacked the top-gallant sheets so that the sail flapped uselessly in the light air. The schooner, which was now close by, hove to, and after some delay her boat was launched, and the boat's crew of four men were soon on the deck of the brig.

"What in all creation are you boys doing aboard this brig?" asked the big, good-humoured mate of the schooner.

"We were blown out to sea in that sail-boat that you are towing," answered Charley, "and we boarded the brig; and while we were trying to get sail on her the *Ghost* got adrift."

"Trying to get sail on her, were you? Did you boys set that there topsail?"

"We did."

"And where on earth were you trying to get to?"

Charley told the mate the whole story—how they had tried to sail the brig into New York, and how the head-wind had baffled them.

"Now," said he, "if you'll take us and the *Ghost* to Sandy Hook, we'll be only too glad to abandon the brig, for we can never get her into port with this wind."

"Should rayther think you couldn't. Why, you might as well try to work Trinity Church to windward with a leg-of-mutton sail rigged on to the steeple. Come aboard the schooner with us, and we'll see what the old man says."

The "old man," or captain of the schooner, was an honest Down East sailor, who first cautiously induced the boys to say that they abandoned all claim to the brig, and then told them that he would carry them to New York and give them back their sail-boat. He left the mate and two men on board the *Hirondelle*, giving them the schooner's small boat, and then steered for Sandy Hook.

The boys had a pleasant sail in the schooner. She was bound from Boston to Philadelphia; but, with the hope of saving the brig, the captain had decided to go to New York, and to send a steam-tug back to tow the brig in. This brought the wind directly ahead, but the schooner, making long tacks, worked to windward so beautifully that by noon the next day she was up to the light-ship. There a steam-tug was met, and the captain of the schooner instantly hired her to go in search of the brig, and to tow her into port.

While the headway of the schooner was checked to enable the captain to bargain with the captain of the steamer, the boys shook hands with everybody, and climbed down into the *Ghost*. When the latter was picked up by the schooner she was pumped out, and the leak was stopped. Nothing was missing from her cabin, and the boys lost no time in setting the jib and mainsail, or rather what could be set of the latter without the gaff.

Even with her crippled mainsail, the *Ghost* kept ahead of the schooner for a long while, and the latter did not overtake her until she was halfway from Sandy Hook to the

Narrows. Now that home was so near, and the dangers of the cruise were over, the boys regretted that they had not cut loose from the schooner when she was within sight of Fire Island inlet. They could have entered the Great South Bay through the inlet, and carried out their plan of crossing from Shinnecock Bay to Peconic Bay.

"It is a shame," said Harry, "to go home when nobody is expecting us. We told them we should be gone for at least four weeks."

"What is a greater shame, if you look at it in that way, is our giving up the brig to the schooner's people," remarked Charley.

"Why, what else could we do?" asked Tom. "You said yourself that we couldn't work the brig in, and that we must abandon her."

"Why couldn't we have hired the captain to send us a steam-tug? We could have stayed on board the brig just as well as the mate and the two men, and if the steam-tug tows them in, why couldn't we have been towed in?"

"I never thought of that," exclaimed Tom.

"Nor I," said Harry and Joe, both together.

"Well, I did think of it," resumed Charley, "and if I'd been alone on the brig, I would have done it. But then Uncle John expected me to take care of the *Ghost* and her crew, and I wasn't instructed to run any risk for the sake of bringing abandoned vessels into port. We did right to give up the brig, but at the same time we did lose a fair chance of making a good big sum of money."

"Why shouldn't we keep right on through Hell Gate into the Sound, and cruise round that way to Canoe Place, and come back through the South Bays?" said Harry. "We can do it easily enough in four weeks."

"And not go home at all?" asked Tom.

"Not till we get back from the cruise. I'm ready to do it."

"So am I," said Joe. "I've been dry for two days, and I begin to feel really uncomfortable. Let's go on, and get wet some more."

"I can go just as well as not," said Charley; "I've nothing else to do."

"And I'd like nothing better," added Tom.

"Then we'll stop somewhere in the city and lay in provisions, and then go through Hell Gate as soon as the tide will let us," said Harry.

"Why not stop a day or two, and see Uncle John, and talk to him about a canoe cruise?" suggested Charley. "Perhaps we could sell the *Ghost*, and get canoes, and have our canoe cruise this summer instead of next year."

"That's what we ought to do," said Tom. "We would enjoy the change from a sail-boat to a canoe more just now than we ever will again."

"And I don't think it would be quite right to start on what would really be a new cruise without seeing Uncle John," said Charley. "We mustn't do it. We'll go home, and if we can manage to get canoes we'll have a canoe cruise, and if we can't, why we'll sail up the Sound, provided you can all get permission to go."

So it was settled that the *Ghost* should head for Harlem, and that her crew should go home for a day or two. Everybody was satisfied with this decision, and in the hope of starting on a canoe cruise, Tom, Harry, and Joe busied themselves in discussing different routes. Before they had finally settled where they would cruise, Charley ran the boat into the dock at Harlem, and the cruise of the *Ghost* was ended.



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